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45. 1675.

Eugène Sue

ROSCOE'S LIBRARY EDITION.

THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

BY M. EUGENE SUE,

AUTHOR OF THE "WANDERING JEW," ETC.

CAREFULLY TRANSLATED, WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT, FROM THE LATEST PARIS EDITION REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

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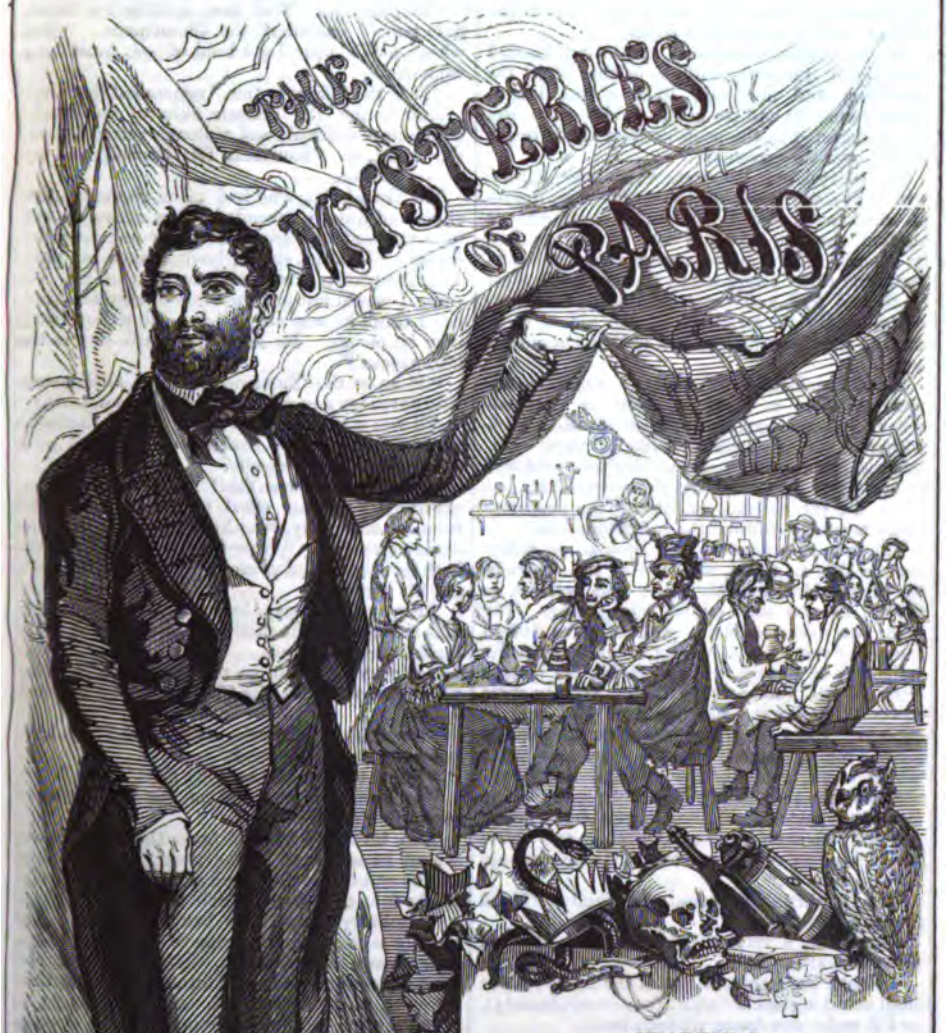


[Eugene Sue.]

CHAPTER I.

THE TAPIS-FRANC.*

TOWARDS the end of the month of October, 1838, on a wet and stormy night, a tall, athletic man, with an old broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head, and clad in a shabby smock-frock, which hung loosely over his blue cotton trousers, crossed the Pont-au-Change, and passed with a quick step into the City, that labyrinth of dark, narrow, and winding streets, which extends from the Palace of Justice to Notre Dame.

Although limited in space, and watched with the greatest vigilance, this quarter serves as the lurking-place or rendezvous of the most dangerous criminals in Paris, who assemble at the *tapis-francs*. A returned convict, called in the slang of the frequenters of these places, an *ogre*, or a woman of the same degraded caste, termed

* *Tapis-franc*, in the slang of Parisian thieves and murderers, signifies a pot-house of the lowest description—the same as what in English *flash* is termed a "boozing-ken."

an *ogress*, is generally the keeper of these haunts of the dregs of Parisian society—liberated felons, thieves, and assassins. Whenever a crime is committed, it is here, in this filthy sewer, that the police-net is first cast, and rarely does it fail to drag out the criminals it seeks.

On the night mentioned, the wind howled fearfully in the dirty gullies of the City; the trembling and uncertain light of the lamps, which swung to and fro in the sudden gusts, was dimly reflected in the pools of inky slush which flowed over the pavement.

The sooty-looking houses, which were lighted within by a few windows, the worm-eaten frames of which were almost paneless, so overhung one another, that the eaves of each almost touched its opposite neighbour, so narrow were the streets. Dark and filthy alleys led to staircases still more black and foul, and so perpendicular, that they could hardly be ascended by the aid of ropes fixed to the dank and humid walls by staples of iron.

The ground-floors of some of these houses were occupied as shops or stalls, by charcoal-sellers, greengrocers, and vendors of offal. Notwithstanding the trifling value of these commodities, the fronts of almost all these wretched abodes were protected by strong iron bars; so much did the shopkeepers dread the desperate characters who infested the neighbourhood.

The man of whom we have spoken, on entering the Rue au Fêves, which is in the centre of the City, slackened his pace, and walked as though he was now *on his own ground*. The night was dark, and fierce gusts of wind dashed the heavy rain with a hissing sound against the walls. Ten o'clock was struck by the distant clock of the Palace of Justice. Women were cowering under the porches, deep and dark as caverns; some hummed snatches of popular songs; others talked together in a low tone; whilst some, benumbed with cold, looked vacantly at the rain, which fell in torrents. The man in the smock-frock, stopping suddenly before one of these creatures gazing silently and sadly, seized her by the arm, and said: "Good evening, *La Goualeuse*."*

The girl shrunk back, and said timidly: "Good evening, *Chourineur*.†"

This man, a returned convict, had received this name at the hulks.

"Now I have got you," said the fellow, "you shall stand a glass of 'tape' (*eau-de-vie*, brandy), or I'll make you dance without music."

"Alas! I have no money," said the poor girl, trembling with fear, for this man was the terror of the locality.

"If you're not *blunted*, the ogress of the *tapis-franc* will chalk it up, for the sake of your pretty face."

"Oh, no; I already owe her for the hire of the clothes I have on."

"Ah! you argue the matter with me, do you?" exclaimed the Chourineur, pursuing La Goualeuse, who had sought refuge in a dark passage.

"Now then I have you, my lady!" said the rascal, after groping about for a few moments, and seizing in one of his powerful hands a thin delicate wrist; "now for the dance I promised you!"

"No! it is *you* who shall dance!" uttered a deep, masculine voice.

"A man! Is it you, Bras-Rouge? Speak, will you, and don't squeeze so hard. This is the entrance to your 'crib,' and I suppose it's you."

"'Tis not Bras-Rouge!" said the voice.

"Oh, isn't it? Well then, as it isn't a friend, here goes!" exclaimed the Chourineur. "But whose *daddle* have I got hold of?—it must be a woman's."

"It is the fellow to this," responded the voice.

And under the delicate skin of this hand, which now suddenly and violently seized him by the throat, the Chourineur felt himself held by nerves of iron.

The Goualeuse, who had taken shelter in this alley, and quietly ascended a few stairs, paused for a moment, and cried out to her unknown defender: "Thanks, sir, for having taken my part. The Chourineur threatened to ill-treat me, because I would not pay for some brandy for him; but I think he was only joking. Now I am safe, pray let me go. Be on your guard—he is the Chourineur!"

"If he be the Chourineur, I am a *milling-cove* who never cry *peccavi!*" exclaimed the unknown.

All was silent for a few seconds, and then was heard in the pitchy darkness the sounds of a fierce and deadly struggle.

"Who the blazes is this!" shouted the ruffian, making a desperate effort to disengage himself from his adversary, who held him with extraordinary strength. "Now then, you shall pay for both Goualeuse and yourself!" shouted he, grinding his teeth.

"Pay, yes, I'll pay, but it shall be with my fists though; and it shall be a discharge in full," replied the unknown.

"If you don't let go my neckcloth, I'll bite your nose off," said the Chourineur, in a stifled voice.

"My nose is too small, my boy, and you have not light enough to see it."

"Come under the 'hanging glim' then."

"So I will, for then we can see the whites of each other's eyes."

And throwing himself upon the Chourineur, whom he still held by the thoat, he forced him to the end of the alley, and then thrust him violently into the street, which was dimly lighted by a solitary lamp. The bandit staggered; but rapidly recovering his balance, he rushed furiously upon the unknown, whose light and elegant figure by no means indicated the incredible strength he had displayed. After a struggle of a few minutes, the Chourineur, although a powerful man, and a proficient in that branch of the pugilistic art vulgarly termed the *savante*, found that he had got his *master*. The unknown gave him the crook twice, throwing him with great dexterity. Unwilling, however, to acknowledge the superiority of his adversary, the Chourineur, boiling with rage, returned to the charge. Then the defender of La Goualeuse, suddenly varying his mode of attack, administered on the head and face of the bandit such a shower of blows, that they fell as if given by hands of iron. The blows, worthy of the admiration of the most celebrated English pugilist, were so entirely different from the system of the *savante*, that the Chourineur dropped like an ox on the pavement, muttering as he fell: "I've had enough—I'm floored!"

"Oh! gracious heaven! have pity on him!" exclaimed La Goualeuse, who, during the affray, had ventured to the threshold of the alley. Then she added, with an air of astonishment: "But who are you then? Except the *Schoolmaster* and

* Sweet-voiced; a good singer.
† One who stabs and slashes with a knife.

Skeleton, there is no one from the Rue Saint-Eloi to Notre Dame, capable of standing against the Chourineur. I thank you, sir, sincerely, for I fear that unless you had come to my assistance, he would have beaten me most unmercifully."

The unknown, instead of replying, listened with deep attention to the voice of the girl. Never had more gentle, sweet, and silvery tones fell on his ear. He endeavoured to distinguish the features of La Goualeuse, but the night was too dark, and the light from the street-lamp too flickering and feeble.

After remaining some minutes without stirring, the Chourineur shook his legs and arms, and partly raised himself from the ground.

"Be on your guard!" exclaimed La Goualeuse, again retreating into the dark passage, and taking her protector by the arm; "pray be on your guard, or he will be revenged on you."

"Be tranquil, my child; if he has not had enough, I am ready to give him some more."

The brigand, who had caught these words, replied, muttering to the unknown: "Thank you; I'm half strangled, with one eye bunged up—that's quite enough for one day. Some other time, perhaps, we may meet again——"

"What! not satisfied, eh?—still grumbling?" said the unknown, in a menacing tone.

"Oh, no—not at all; I do not grumble in the least. You have served me out—you are a *plucky cove*," said the Chourineur, in a half-sulky tone, but with that sort of deference which physical superiority inspires in men of his grade. "You have got the best of me, that's certain. Well, except the Skeleton, who seems to have bones of iron, he is so thin and powerful, and the Schoolmaster, who could eat three Herculeses for his breakfast, no man living could before boast of having put his foot on my neck."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, now I have found my master—that's all; you will find yours some day or other—every body does. However, one thing is certain; now that you have whacked the Chourineur, you may go your length in the City. All the women will be your slaves; ogres and ogresses will give you *tick*, if it is only out of fear; you may be a king in your way! That's something. But who and what are you? You *patter flash* like a *family man!** If you are a 'prig,' I will have nothing to do with you. I have used the knife, to be sure, because, when the blood rises I must strike, in spite of myself; but I have paid for my stabbing, by going to the hulks for fifteen years. My time is up, and I am free from surveillance. I can now reside in the capital, without fear of the 'traps,' and I have never prigged—have I, La Goualeuse?

"That is true; he never was a thief," said the girl.

"Come along then, and let us have a glass of something together, and you shall know who I am," said the unknown. "Come, don't let us bear malice."

"Bear malice!—not I. You are the best man—I confess it, and there's an end of it. Thunder and lightning! how your blows fell upon my nob; I never was punished so before. Yours is a new game; you must give me some lessons."

"I will commence as soon as you like."

"Not on me, thank you! Oh, no—not on me!" exclaimed the Chourineur, laughing; "your blows fell like the strokes of a sledge-hammer; I am still dizzy from them. But do you know Bras-Rouge, in the passage of whose house you were?"

* A common thief.

"Bras-Rouge?" said the unknown, as if disagreeably surprised at this question; adding, however, with an indifferent air: "I do not know Bras-Rouge; is he the only person who lives in this house then? It rained in torrents, and I took shelter in the alley. You meant to ill-treat this poor girl, and I have thrashed you—that's all."

"Very good; I have no business to meddle with your affairs. Bras-Rouge occupies a room here, but is not often at home. He is mostly at his *estaminet* in the Champs Elysées. Let us say no more about him." Then, addressing himself to La Goualeuse, he said: "On the word of a man, you are a good girl, and I would not have struck you; you know I would not harm a child—it was only a joke of mine. But never mind; it was very good on your part not to urge on this friend of yours against me when I was floored, and could not help myself. Come and have something to drink with us; this gentleman will pay. By the by, my right-un," said he to the unknown, "what do you say, instead of lushing, shall we go and have a bit of supper with the ogress at the White Rabbit? It is a *tapis-franc*."

"Agreed! I'll pay for the supper. You'll come with us, La Goualeuse?" said the unknown.

"Thank you, sir," she replied; but, having witnessed the struggle between you, it has made my heart beat so, that I have no appetite."

"Stuff, stuff! your appetite will return when you begin to eat," said the Chourineur; "and the cookery at the White Rabbit is famous."

The three personages, now upon the best terms with one another, directed their steps towards the tavern.

During the squabble between the Chourineur and the unknown, a charcoal-seller, of colossal proportions, concealed in another passage, had anxiously observed the chances of the combat, but still, as we have seen, without rendering the slightest assistance to either adversary. When the unknown, the Chourineur, and La Goualeuse proceeded towards the public-house, the charcoal-man followed them.

The bandit and La Goualeuse first entered the *tapis-franc;* the unknown was following them, when the charcoal-man approached him, and whispered in German, in a tone of respectful remonstrance: "Pray, *your highness*, be on your guard!"

The unknown shrugged his shoulders carelessly, and rejoined his companions. The charcoal-man did not leave the door of the cabaret; listening attentively, he gazed from time to time through a small hole which had been accidentally made in the thick coat of whitening with which the inside of the windows of such haunts are usually covered.

CHAPTER II.

THE OGRESS.

The White Rabbit is situated about the centre of the Rue aux Fèves. This tavern occupies the ground-floor of a lofty house, the front of which forms two windows, which are styled "a *guillotine*." From the front of the door of a dark, arched passage, hung a kind of oblong lantern, on the cracked glass of which was written, in red letters: "*Nightly Lodgings here.*"

The Chourineur, the unknown, and La Goualeuse, entered a large, low room, with a smoked ceiling, crossed by black rafters, just discernible by the reddish light of a miserable, hanging lamp. The cracked walls, once covered with plaster,

were here and there ornamented with designs of a not very delicate nature, or scrawled over with flash and obscene sentences. The floor, composed of mud and saltpetre, was covered with dirt; a little straw, which served for a carpet, was placed at the foot of the ogress's counter, which was on the right of the door, just beyond the lamp.

On each side of this room stood six tables; which, with their accompanying benches, were fastened at one end to the wall. At the bottom of the room was a door leading to the kitchen; on the right, near the counter, was another opening on a passage communicating with the wretched hole in which the ogress lodged her customers at three-halfpence a night.

A few words will suffice to describe the ogress and her guests. Known by the name of Mother Ponisse, her triple profession consisted in letting lodgings, keeping a cabaret, and lending clothes on hire to the wretched women who infest the streets of this vile neighbourhood. The ogress was about forty years of age; tall, stout-built, robust, ruddy-visaged, and gifted with a beard. Her hoarse, masculine voice, and huge arms and hands, denoted uncommon strength; an old red and yellow handkerchief was tied over her cap; a rabbit-skin shawl, crossing her bosom, was knotted behind her back; her green woollen gown did not conceal her black wooden shoes, scorched and burnt by the small stove at which she warmed her feet; and, to crown all, the complexion of the ogress was bronzed and inflamed by the abuse of strong liquors.

The counter, covered with lead, was ornamented with various pewter and tin measures, and on a tablet attached to the wall, were several glass bottles, fashioned to represent the Emperor on foot. These bottles contained liquors, coloured red and green, and known by the names of "Drops for the Brave," "Ratafia of the Column," &c. &c.

A large black cat, with green eyes, was sitting near the ogress, and seemed the familiar demon of the place. Then, in strange contrast, a holy branch of boxwood, bought at church by the ogress, was suspended at the back of an old cuckoo-clock.

Two marvellously ill-favoured fellows, with unshaven beards, and their clothes in rags, who hardly tasted of the pitcher of wine before them, conversed together in a low voice, and with uneasy aspect. One of the two, very pale and livid, pulled, from time to time, his shabby skull-cap over his brows, and concealed as much as possible his left hand, and, even when compelled to use it, he did so with extreme caution.

Further on there was a youngster, hardly sixteen years of age, with beardless chin, and a countenance wan, wrinkled, and heavy, his eye dull, and his long black hair straggling down his neck. This scapegrace, the emblem of precocious vice, was smoking a short black pipe. His back was resting against the wall, his two hands were stuck in the pockets of his blouse, and his legs stretched along the bench. He did not cease smoking for a moment, unless it was to drink from a small measure of brandy placed before him.

The other inmates of the *tapis-franc*, men and women, presented no remarkable characteristics. There was the ferocious or embruted face—the vulgar and licentious mirth; but from time to time there was a deep and dull silence.

Such were the guests of the White Rabbit, when the Chourineur, La Goualeuse, and the unknown, entered.

As these three personages play important parts in this narrative, and their appearance is characteristic, we must describe them more particularly.

The Chourineur was a man of tall stature and athletic make, with light hair, approaching to white, bushy eye-brows, and enormous red whiskers. Exposure to the weather, poverty, and the severe toil of the galleys, had bronzed his countenance with that dark olive tint which is peculiar to convicts. Notwithstanding his terrible surname, the features of this man expressed rather brutal hardihood than ferocity.

We have already said that the Chourineur was clothed in a shabby blue cotton frock, and trousers of the same material, and wore one of those large straw hats peculiar to men employed in timber-yards, and as water-side labourers.

The Goualeuse was, perhaps, about sixteen and a half years old. A forehead of the purest and whitest surmounted a face perfectly oval and of angelic expression; a fringe of eyelids, so long that they curled slightly, half veiled her large blue eyes, of a melancholy expression. The down of early youth graced her cheeks, lightly coloured with a scarlet tinge. Her small, rosy mouth, which hardly ever smiled—her nose, straight, and delicately chiselled—her rounded chin, formed, in their combined expression, an outline of singularly perfect beauty. On each side of her fair temples was a band of hair, of the most splendid auburn hue, which descended in luxuriant ringlets half-way down her cheeks, and were then turned back behind the ear, a portion of which—ivory shaded with carnation—was thus visible, and then lost itself under the close folds of a large cotton handkerchief, with blue checks, tied, as it is called, *en marmotte*. Her graceful neck, of dazzling whiteness, was encircled by a small necklace of grains of coral. Her gown, of brown stuff, though much too large, did not wholly conceal a charming form, supple and round as a cane; a worn-out, small orange-coloured shawl, with green fringe, was crossed over her bosom.

The charming voice of La Goualeuse had made a strong impression on her unknown defender. In truth, that voice, so gentle, so deliciously modulated, and harmonious, had an attraction so irresistible, that even the horde of villains and abandoned women, among whom this unfortunate girl lived, would often beg her to sing, listening to her with rapture. La Goualeuse had another name, given, doubtless, to the maiden purity and sweetness of her countenance—she was also called *Fleur-de-Marie*, which in the slang of these vile wretches, signifies *the virgin*.

We wish we could make our readers comprehend the singular impression made upon us, when, in the midst of this infamous vocabulary, in which the words signifying theft and murder are even more hideous and frightful than the things signified, we met with the metaphor, so softly, so sweetly, so tenderly pious—*Fleur-de-Marie*.

Is it not like a beauteous lily, uplifting the perfumed snowiness of its spotless chalice in a field of carnage?

Strange contrast! marvellous chance! The inventors of this terrible language have thus risen to the elevation of poetry, and imparted another charm to the chaste thought which they wished to express.

The defender of La Goualeuse (we shall call the unknown Rodolph) appeared to be about thirty-six years of age; his figure, tall, graceful,

THE CHOURINEUR.

and perfectly proportioned, did not betoken the astonishing vigour which he had displayed in the struggle with the athletic Chourineur.

It would have been difficult to assign a decided character to the physiognomy of Rodolph. Certain wrinkles in his forehead betokened a man of meditation; and yet the firm expression of his mouth, the dignified and bold carriage of the head, assured us of the man of action, whose physical strength and presence of mind would always command an ascendancy over the multitude.

In his struggle with the Chourineur, Rodolph had neither betrayed anger nor hatred. Confident in his own strength, his address, and agility, he had only shewn a contempt for the brute beast which he subdued.

We will finish this physical portrait of Rodolph, by saying that his features, regularly handsome, seemed too beautiful for a man. His eyes were large, and of a deep hazel, his nose aquiline, his chin rather projecting, his hair bright chesnut, of the same shade as his eyebrows, which were strongly arched, and his small moustache, which was fine and silky. Thanks to the manners and the language which he assumed with so much ease, Rodolph closely resembled the other guests of the ogress. Round his graceful neck, as elegantly modelled as that of the Indian Bacchus, he wore a black cravat, carelessly tied, the ends of which fell on the collar of his blue blouse. A double row of nails decorated his heavy shoes, and, except that his hands were of a most aristocratic shape, nothing distinguished him from the other guests of the *tapis-franc;* though, in a moral sense, his resolute air, and bold serenity, placed an immense distance between them.

On entering the *tapis-franc*, the Chourineur, laying one of his heavy hands on the shoulder of Rodolph, cried: "Salute the master of the Chourineur! Yes, my lads, this young-un has floored me; and if any of you want your ribs broken, or your nobs cracked, here is the man who will do it for you, not excepting the Schoolmaster and the Skeleton; and I will back him for what you like."

At these words, all present, from the ogress to the lowest frequenter of the *tapis-franc*, contemplated the conqueror of the Chourineur with respect and fear. Some, moving their glasses and jugs to the end of the table at which they were seated, offered to make room for Rodolph, if he chose to sit among them; others approached the Chourineur, and asked him, in a whisper, for the particulars of this unknown, who had made his entrance among them in so striking a manner.

Even the ogress accosted Rodolph with one of her most gracious smiles, and (a thing unheard of, and almost deemed fabulous, in the annals of the White Rabbit) actually rose from the bar to take the orders of her guest, and know what he desired to have for the refreshment of his party —an attention which she did not observe either towards the Schoolmaster or the Skeleton, two fearful ruffians, who made even the Chourineur tremble.

One of the men with the sinister aspect, whom we have described as being very pale, hiding his left hand, and continually pulling his cap over his brows, leaned towards the ogress, who was carefully wiping the table where Rodolph had taken his seat, and said to her, in a hoarse tone: "Hasn't the Gros-Boiteux been here to-day?"

"No," said Mother Ponisse.

"Nor yesterday?"

"Yes, he came yesterday."

"Was Calebasse with him—the daughter of Martial, who was guillotined? You know whom I mean—the Martials of the *Ile du Ravageur?*"

"What! do you take me for a spy, that you ask me such questions? Do you think I watch my customers?" said the ogress, in a brutal voice.

"I have an appointment to-night with the Gros-Broiteux and the Schoolmaster," replied the fellow; "we have some business together."

"That's your affair—a set of ruffians, as you are, altogether!"

"Ruffians!" said the man, with an air of irritation, "it is by such ruffians that you get your living."

"Will you hold your jaw!" said the ogress, with a menacing air, lifting, as she spoke, the pitcher she held in her hand—and the man went grumbling to his seat.

"The Gros-Boiteux has, perhaps, stayed to give that young fellow Germain, who lives in the Rue du Temple, his gruel," said he to his companion.

"What, do they mean to *settle* him?"

"No, not quite, but to make him more careful in future. It appears he has 'blown the gaff' in the job at Nantes, so Bras Rouge declares."

"That is Gros-Boiteux' affair; he has only just left prison, and has his hands full already."

Fleur-de-Marie had followed the Chourineur into the tavern of the ogress, and, responding to a nod given to him by the young scamp with the jaded appearance, he said: "Ah, Barbillon! what! soaking your clay with the old stuff?"

"Yes, I would rather starve, and go barefoot any day, than be without the *drops* for my throttle, and the *weed* for my pipe," said the young man, in a hoarse voice, without changing his position, and puffing out volumes of tobacco-smoke.

"Good evening, Fleur-de-Marie," said the ogress, on the approach of La Goualeuse, looking with a prying eye on the clothes of the poor girl—clothes which she had lent her. After her scrutiny, she said, in a tone of coarse satisfaction: "It's quite a pleasure to lend one's things to you, you are as clean as a kitten, or else I would never have trusted you with that shawl such a beauty as that orange one is, I would never have trusted it to such dirty creatures as *Tourneuse* and *Boulotte;* but then I have taken great care of you ever since you came here six weeks ago; and, if the truth must be spoken, I will say that for you, there is not a tidier nor more nicer wench than you in all the city."

The Goualeuse sighed, turned her head, and said nothing.

"Hillo, mother!" said Rodolph to the ogress, "I see you have got a holy bough over your cuckoo," pointing with his finger to the consecrated branch behind the old clock.

"Why, you heathen, would you have us live like dogs?" replied this horrible woman. Then, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, she added: "Come, now, Goualeuse, will you tip us one of your pretty little ditties?"

"Not till after supper, Mother Ponisse," said the Chourineur.

"Well, my brave lad, what can I serve you with?" said the ogress to Rodolph, whose favour she was desirous to obtain, and whose support she might, perchance, require.

"Ask the Chourineur; he'll order, and I will pay."

"Well then," said the ogress, turning to the bandit, "what will you have for supper, you 'bad lot?'"

"Two quarts of wine, at twelve sous, three crusts of the best wheaten bread, and a *harlequin*,"* said the Chourineur, after considering for a moment what he should order.

"Ah! you are a regular lick-chops, I know, and mighty fond of *harlequins*.

"Well, Goualeuse," said the Chourineur, "are you hungry?"

"No, Chourineur."

"Would you like anything better than a *harlequin*, my girl?" said Rodolph.

"Oh, no, thank you; I have no appetite."

"Well, but look at my *master*, girl," said the Chourineur, with a brutal grin; "you have no objection, I suppose?"

The poor girl blushed, but did not look at Rodolph. After a few moments the ogress herself placed on the table a pitcher of wine, bread, and a *harlequin*, of which we will not attempt to give an idea to the reader, but which appeared to be highly relished by the Chourineur; who exclaimed God of gods, what a dish!—what a glorious dish! it is a regular omnibus; there is something in it to every body's taste. Those who like fat can have it; so can they who like lean; as well as those who prefer sugar, and those who choose pepper. There's tender bits of chicken, biscuit, sausage, tarts, mutton-bones, pastry-crust, fried fish, vegetables, woodcocks' heads, cheese, and salad. Ah! why don't you eat, La Goualeuse? eat; it is so capital! You have been to a wedding-breakfast somewhere, this morning."

"No more than on other mornings. I ate this morning, as usual, my ha'porth of milk, and my ha'porth of bread."

The entrance of another personage into the cabaret interrupted all conversation for a moment, and every body turned his head in the direction of the new comer, who was a middle-aged man, active, and robust, wearing a loose jacket and cap. He was evidently quite at home in the *tapis-franc*, and, in the language of the place, he requested to be supplied with supper. He so placed himself, that he could observe the two ill-looking fellows who had asked after Gros Boiteux and the Schoolmaster. He did not take his eyes off them; but, in consequence of their position, they could not observe the marked and constant attention bestowed upon them.

The conversation, momentarily interrupted, was resumed. In spite of his audacity, the Chourineur showed a kind of deference to Rodolph, and did not venture to treat him with familiarity.

"By my faith," said he to Rodolph, "although I have suffered for it, I am glad to have met with you."

"Because you relish the *harlequin*?"

"Perhaps so; but more because I am anxious to see you whack the Schoolmaster. To see the *bounce* taken out of him who has always *bounced* me, would do my heart good."

"Do you suppose, then, that for your amusement, I shall attack the Schoolmaster, like a bull-dog?"

"No, but he'll be on to you in a moment, when he is told that you are a better man than he," chuckled the Chourineur, rubbing his hands.

"Well, I have coin enough left to give him his full change," said Rodolph, in a careless tone. Then he added: "It is not weather fit for a dog: what say you to a pot of brandy with sugar in it?"

"That's your sort!" said the Chourineur.

And, that we may be better acquainted, we will teach each other who we are," added Rodolph.

"The Albinos, called the Chourineur, a returned convict, a lander of the wood that floats at St. Paul's Quay; frozen in the winter, scorched in the summer, from twelve to fifteen hours a day in the water; half man, half frog; that's my description," said Rodolph's companion, making him a military salute with his left hand. "Well, now, and you, my master, this is your first appearance in the City. I don't mean anything offensive; but you ran at me like a bull, and made a drum of my carcase. Name of names, what a devil's own tattoo you did beat! which doubled me up like a rolley-polley! I shall never forget—thick as hobnails in a carter's highlow—what a torrent!—ding-dong, one-two! But you must follow some other trade besides 'hammering' the Chourineur?"

"I am a fan-painter, and my name is Rodolph."

"A fan-painter! Ah! that accounts for your having such white hands," said the Chourineur. "Never mind, if you are a specimen of your comrades, you are not a bad lot of chaps. But, as you are an honest workman, what brings you to a *tapis-franc* in the City, where there are only 'prigs' and 'laggers'* like me, who cannot 'show' anywhere else? This is no place for you; honest people have their coffee-shops, and don't 'patter flash.'"

"I came here because I like good company."

"Over the left!" said the Chourineur, shaking his head with a doubtful air. 'I met with you in the passage of Bras Rouge; but that's neither here nor there. You say you don't know him?"

"What do you mean by bothering me about your Bras Rouge? Bras Rouge be ——"

"Hold, master! Perhaps you have your suspicions of me; but don't be too fast. If you like, I will tell you my history; but it must be on the condition that you teach me how to use my fists in the same style as you adopted when you tackled me. What say you?"

"Agreed, Chourineur; you shall tell me your history, and La Goualeuse shall tell us hers also."

"Very well," replied the Chourineur; "it is not fit weather to turn a cat out, and it will be amusement. Are you agreeable, Goualeuse?"

"Oh, yes; but my story will not take long to tell," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"And you, comrade Rodolph, you will tell us yours," added the Chourineur.

"Well then, I'll begin."

"Fan-painter!" said La Goualeuse; "what a very pretty trade!"

"And how much can you make at it, if you stick close to it?" asked the Chourineur.

"I am on piece-work," responded Rodolph; "my best days are worth three francs, sometimes four; but that is in summer, when the days are long."

"And you are idle, sometimes, lazy-bones?"

"Yes, as long as I have money, though I do

* A harlequin is composed of the remains of the eatables of all kinds, left at the tables of large French establishments, including fish, flesh, and fowl, vegetables and sweetmeats, fruits and cheese, and forms a profitable and saleable mixture amongst those who provide for the class to which the Chourineur belongs.

* Thieves and liberated convicts.

not spend it wastefully. First, I pay ten sous for my night's lodging."

"Excuse me, monseigneur—so you pay ten sous for your night's lodging, do you?" said the Chourineur, raising his hand to his cap.

The word *monseigneur*, spoken in an ironical tone by the Chourineur, caused Rodolph to smile imperceptibly; and he replied: "Oh, I like to be clean and comfortable."

"Here's a great lord for you! a *swell* with lots of *blunt*," exclaimed the Chourineur, "who pays ten sous a night for his bed!"

"Well then," continued Rodolph, "there are four sous for tobacco—that makes fourteen; four sous for breakfast, eighteen; fifteen sous for dinner; one or two sous for brandy; and that comes altogether to about thirty-four or thirty-five sous a day. I have no occasion to work all the week, and so the rest of the time I make holiday."

"And your family?" said La Goualeuse.

"The cholera took them off," replied Rodolph.

"Who were your parents?" asked La Goualeuse.

"They kept an old clothes and marine-store shop, under the pillars of the market-place."

"How did you dispose of what they left you?" inquired the Chourineur.

"I was too young, and my guardian did that; and when I came of age, he brought me in his debtor for thirty francs—that was my inheritance."

"And who is now your employer?" demanded the Chourineur.

"His name is Gauthier, in the Rue des Bourdonnais—a beastly, stingy thief—a miser! who would almost as soon lose his eyesight as pay his workmen. That's the best character I can give him, so let's say no more about him. I learned my trade under him from the age of fifteen; I have a good number in the conscription, and my name is Rodolph Durand. That is my history."

"Now, Goualeuse, it is your turn," said the Chourineur; "I will keep my story till the last, for the *bonne bouche*—the tit-bit of our evening's amusement."

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF LA GOUALEUSE.

"Begin with the beginning," said the Chourineur.

"Yes, your parents," added Rodolph.

"I never knew them," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Ha, ha! that is very droll, La Goualeuse," said the Chourineur; "you and I are of the same family."

"You too, Chourineur?"

"Yes; an orphan of the streets of Paris, the same as you were, my girl."

"Who brought you up then, La Goualeuse?" asked Rodolph.

"I do not know, sir; as far back as I can recollect, when I believe I was about seven or eight years old, I lived with an old, one-eyed woman, whom they call *La Chouette*,* because she had a hooked nose, a very round green eye, and altogether resembled an owl with an eye out."

"Ha! ha! ha! I think I see her now, the old gunner!" shouted the Chourineur.

"This one-eyed old woman," resumed Fleur-de-Marie, "sent me to sell barley-sugar at night on the Pont Neuf; but that was merely an excuse for begging: and when I did not take her ten sous at least, the Chouette gave me a beating instead of my supper."

"And are you sure that the female was not your mother?" inquired Rodolph.

"I am quite sure; for she often scolded me for having neither father nor mother, and said she picked me up one day in the street."

"So," said the Chourineur, "you danced instead of eating, when you did not pick up ten sous?"

"Yes," and afterwards had to lie upon some straw spread upon the ground, when I was almost perished with cold."

"I do not doubt it," cried the Chourineur. "Straw is very cold sort of stuff; a dung-heap is as good again; but then people don't like the smell of you, and say: 'Oh, the nasty beast! where has he been?'"

This joke made Rodolph smile, and Fleur-de-Marie resumed: "The next morning, the one-eyed woman gave me the same allowance for breakfast as for supper, and sent me to Montfaucon to look for worms to bait fish; for during the day, the Chouette kept her stall for selling fishing-tackle by the bridge of Notre Dame. For a child seven years old, half dead with hunger and cold, it is a long way from the Rue de la Mortellerie to Montfaucon."

"But the exercise has made you grow as straight as a dart, my girl, so you must not complain of that," said the Chourineur, striking a light for his pipe.

"Well," said the Goualeuse, "I used to return very, very tired; then, about noon, the Chouette used to give me a little piece of dry bread."

"Ah! eating little has made you as genteel as a wasp, my girl; so you must not find fault with that either," said the Chourineur, puffing the smoke from the bowl of his pipe. "But what ails you, comrade?—I mean to say, Master Rodolph? Does her wretched situation make you down in the mouth? Ah, we all know what it is to be poor and miserable."

"Oh! you cannot have been as wretched as I was, Chourineur!" said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Not as I, Goualeuse? Only fancy, my girl, you were somewhat green compared to me! At least, when you were little, you had straw to sleep on, and bread to eat; for my part, I used to spend my most comfortable nights in the lime-kilns at Clichy, like a genuine vagabond, and fed upon cabbage-stumps and such-like dainties, which I picked up when and where I could; but as I was often too tired, after my day's work, to go so far as the lime-kilns at Clichy, I slept under the large stones at the Louvre; and in winter I had beautiful white sheets—whenever the snow fell."

"Ah! a man is hardy; but I was a poor little girl," said Fleur-de-Marie. "And yet for all that, I was as plump as a robin."

"And can you remember that?"

"Oh, very well! When La Chouette beat me, the first blow always knocked me down; then she stamped upon me, muttering: 'Ah, the nasty little beast!' she hasn't a farthing's-worth of strength—she can't even bear a couple of thumps without falling! 'and then she called me Pegriotte (little thief); I never had any other name—that was my baptismal name."

"Just like me—I had the sort of baptism they give to stray dogs. I was called 'Come here!' 'Now then!' or the Albinos. It is astonishing how

* The screech-owl.

much we resemble one another, my girl, said the Chourineur.

"That is true—in our misery," said Fleur-de-Marie, addressing herself to the Chourineur; for in spite of herself, she almost always felt a sort of shame before Rodolph, and scarcely ventured to lift up her eyes, although he seemed to belong to the class with whom she had generally lived.

"And when you had fetched the worms for the Chouette, what did you do next?" asked the Chourineur.

"Then the old woman would send me to beg round where she kept her stall till night; and in the evening she went to the Pont Neuf, to sell her fried fish." Oh, dear! I used to think it a long time to wait for a morsel of bread; but if I was unlucky enough to ask the Chouette for something to eat, she would beat me, and say: 'Get ten sous, and you shall have your supper, Pegriotte.". Ah, me! then, being hungry, and sore from the thumps and kicks she gave me, I cried as if my heart would break; but the old woman put my tray of sweetmeats about my neck, and placed me on the Pont Neuf, where, in winter, I was almost frozen to death. And yet sometimes, in spite of myself, I slept as I stood; but not long, for the Chouette kicked me till I awoke. Then I remained on the bridge till eleven o'clock, my tray of barley-sugar hanging round my neck, and often crying bitterly. On seeing me cry, the passengers would sometimes give me a trifle; and I often obtained ten and fifteen sous, which I gave to the Chouette, who searched me all over, and even examined my mouth, to see if I had concealed anything."

"Faith, fifteen sous was a good 'swag' for a little-un like you."

"Yes, then the one-eyed woman, seeing that—"

"With one eye!" said the Chourineur, with a laugh.

"To be sure, because she had but one. Well, when she discovered the secret of my success, she always beat me severely before she took me to my post on the bridge, in order that I might cry and sob as people passed by, and so get more money."

"That was brutal, but very cunning."

"Ah, indeed! At last I got hardened to blows. I saw that the Chouette was very angry when I did not cry, so, to be revenged upon her, the more she ill-used me the more I laughed, though the pain forced the tears into my eyes."

"But, my poor Goualeuse, did not the barley-sugar tempt you?"

"Ah, Chourineur, that it did; but I never tasted it, although I longed to do so. Alas! that desire was my ruin. One day, returning from Montfaucon, some little boys beat me, and took away my basket. I returned home, well knowing what was in store for me, and I had a merciless thumping, and no bread. In the evening, before she took me to the bridge, the Chouette, furious because I had taken nothing home the evening before, instead of beating me as usual, to make me cry, tortured me by pulling my hair from the side of the temples, a part most sensible to pain."

"Thousand thunders! that was coming it too strong!" shouted the bandit, striking the table fiercely with his fist, and kniting his bushy brows. "Beat a child—that's tolerable; but to torture it! Blood and thunder!"

Rodolph had listened attentively to the narrative of Fleur-de-Marie, and he now looked with astonishment at the Chourineur.

"What is the matter with you, Chourineur?" he inquired.

"The matter!—what is the matter? Have you no feeling then? Is your heart as hard as your knuckles?"

"Go on, my girl," said Rodolph, without appearing to notice the remonstrance of the Chourineur.

"I have told you how the Chouette beat me to make me cry. I was then sent to the bridge with my barley-sugar. The old woman was at her stall, and from time to time she shook her clenched fist at me. However, as I had not broken my fast since the night before, and was very hungry, at the risk of putting the Chouette in a passion, I took a piece of barley-sugar, and began to eat it."

"Bravo, my girl!"

"I ate a second piece ——"

"Capital! pluck for ever!"

"I found it very nice; not so much from daintiness as from real hunger. But an orange-woman cried out to the one-eyed woman: "Holloa! Chouette, Pegriotte is eating the barley-sugar!"

"Oh, thunder and lightning!" said the Chourineur; "what a row there would be! Poor little mouse, what a fright you must have been in, when the Chouette saw you!"

"How did you get out of the scrape, poor Goualeuse?" asked Rodolph, with as much interest as the Chourineur.

"Ah! it was a serious matter to me; but that was afterwards: for the old woman, although boiling over with rage at seeing me devour the barley-sugar, could not leave her stove, for the fish was frying."

"Ha, ha, ha! Very true—that was a difficult position for the old girl," cried the Chourineur, roaring with laughter.

"At a distance, the Chouette threatened me with her long iron fork. When her fish was cooked, she came up to me. I had only received three sous in charity, and I had eaten six sous' worth of barley-sugar. She did not say a word, but took me by the hand, and pulled me away after her. At this moment, I do not know how it was that I did not drop dead with fright. I remember it as well as if it were but now—it was about New-year's day, and there was a great many shops on the Pont Neuf, all filled with toys, and I had been looking at them all the evening with the greatest delight — beautiful dolls, little furnished houses: you know how amusing such things are to a child."

"And had you never any playthings, Goualeuse?" asked the Chourineur.

"I? Good heaven! who was there to give me any playthings?" said the young girl, in a sad tone. "However, the evening passed away. Although it was in the depth of winter, I only had on a little cotton gown, no stockings, no shift, and with wooden shoes on my feet: not enough to stifle one with heat, was it? Well, when the one-eyed woman took me by the hand, I became bathed in perspiration from head to foot. What frightened me most was that, instead of swearing and storming as usual, she only kept on muttering between her teeth. She never once let go my hand, but made me walk so fast—so very fast—that I was obliged to run to keep up with her, and in running I had lost one of my wooden shoes; and as I did not dare to say so, I followed her with one foot naked on the bare stones, and when we reached home it was covered with blood."

"The blind old devil!" said the Chourineur, again striking the table in his rage. "It makes me shudder to think of the poor child trotting along beside the old thief, with her poor little foot all bloody!"

"We lodged in a garret in the Rue de la Montellerie: adjoining the entrance to our alley, there was a dram-shop, into which the Chouette went, still dragging me by the hand, and drank a half-pint of brandy at the bar."

"Thunder! Why I could not drink that without being half drunk!"

It was the old woman's regular allowance: perhaps that was the reason she beat me so much. At length, we got up into our loft; the Chouette double-locked the door; then I threw myself at her feet, and begged her pardon for having eaten the barley-sugar. She did not answer me, and I heard her mumbling to herself as she walked about the room: 'What shall I do to-night to this little thief, for eating my barley-sugar? Let me see—how shall I serve her out? Ah, yes!' And then she looked at me maliciously with her one green eye, while I still knelt before her. Then she suddenly went to a shelf and took down a pair of pincers."

"Pincers!" exclaimed the Chourineur.

"Yes, pincers."

"What for?"

"To strike you?" asked Rodolph.

"To pinch you?" inquired the Chourineur.

"Oh, no," answered the poor girl, trembling at the very thought.

"To pluck out your hair?"

"No; to take out one of my teeth."

On hearing this, the Chourineur uttered such a terrible oath, accompanied with such furious imprecations, that all the guests in the *tapis-franc* looked at him with astonishment.

"Why, what ails you?" asked Rodolph.

"What ails me?—ails me! Why, I'll flee her alive, the one-eyed old baggage! if I can catch her. Where is she?—tell me, where is she? Let me find her, and I'll choke the old ——"

"And did the old wretch really take out your tooth, my poor girl?" demanded Rodolph, whilst the Chourineur vented his rage in a volley of the most violent epithets.

"Yes, sir; but not at the first pull. Great heaven! how I suffered! She held my head between her knees, as if it had been in a vice. Then, partly with the pincers, and partly with her fingers, she pulled out my tooth, and then said: 'Now, Pegriotte, I will pull out one every day; and when I have pulled out the last, I will throw you into the river, to be eaten by the fishes.'"

"Ah, the old devil! to wrench out a poor child's teeth in that manner!" exclaimed the Chourineur, with redoubled fury.

"And how did you escape from the Chouette?" inquired Rodolph of the Goualeuse.

"The following day, instead of going to Montfaucon, I went on the side of the Champs Elysées, so afraid was I of being drowned by the Chouette. I would have gone to the end of the world, rather than have fallen into her clutches again. After roaming for some time, I fairly lost myself: I had not begged anything, and the more I thought, the more frightened did I become. At night I hid myself in a timber-yard, under some piles of wood. As I was very little, I was able to creep under an old door, and hide myself amongst a heap of logs. I was so hungry, that I tried to gnaw a piece of the bark, but I could not bite it—it was too hard. At length I fell asleep.

morning, hearing a noise, I crept still further under the wood-pile. It was tolerably warm, and if I had had something to eat, I could not have been more comfortable, considering it was winter time.

"Just like me in the lime-kilns."

"I did not dare to quit the timber-yard, for I fancied that the Chouette would hunt for me every where, to pull out my teeth and drown me, and that she would be sure to catch me if I stirred from my hiding-place."

Hold! do not speak of that old monster again—it makes the blood come into my eyes! The truth is, that you have known misery—misery of the worst kind. Poor little soul! be assured that I am very sorry that I frightened you so just now, when I threatened to beat you. I did not mean it, on the faith of a man."

"Why should you not have beaten me? I have no one to protect me."

"That's the very reason, because you are not like the others—because you have no one to take your part, that I would not have beaten you. When I say, no one, I do not mean our comrade Rodolph; but his coming was a piece of luck, and he certainly did give me my allowance when he did come."

"Proceed, my child," said Rodolph. "How did you get away from the timber-yard?"

"Next day, about noon, I heard a great dog barking under the pile of wood. I listened. The bark came nearer and nearer; then a deep, hoarse voice exclaimed: 'My dog barks—somebody is hid in the yard!' Thieves!' said another voice; and the men began to encourage the dog, and cry: 'Seize 'em! shake 'em there!' The dog ran towards me, and for fear of being bitten, I began to cry out with all my might. 'Hark!' said a voice: 'I hear the cry of a child.' They called the dog off; I came out from the pile of wood, and saw a bluff-looking gentleman and a man in a blouse. 'Ah, what do you do in my timber-yard, you little thief?' said the gentleman in a menacing tone. I put my hands together, and said: 'Pray don't hurt me: I have had nothing to eat for two days, and I've run away from the Chouette, who pulled out my tooth, and said she would throw me to the fishes. Not knowing where to sleep, I was passing your yard, and slept during the night amongst these logs, under this heap, not thinking to hurt any body.'"

"'I'm not to be deceived in that way! You came here to steal my wood. Go and call the police,' said the timber-merchant to his man."

"Ah, the old fool! the old numscull! Call the guard! Why didn't he send for a regiment of soldiers?" said the Chourineur. "Steal his wood, indeed, and you only eight years old! What an old ass!"

"'Not likely, sir,' his man replied. 'Steal your logs, master! How can she do that? She is not so big as the little pieces!' 'Very likely,' said the timber-merchant; 'but if she does not come to thieve on her own account, she does for others. This is the plan that thieves adopt; they have a parcel of children, whom they send to pry about and hide themselves, to open the doors of houses. She must be taken to the magistrate, and take care she does not escape.'"

"Upon my honour, this timber-merchant was more of a log than any piece of wood in his yard." said the Chourineur.

"I was taken to the magistrate," resumed Goualeuse. "I accused myself of being a vagrant, and they sent me to prison. I was taken before the court, and formally sentenced as a rogue and vagabond, to remain until I was sixteen years of age in a house of correction. I heartily thank the judges for their kindness; for in prison I had food, I was not beaten, and it was a perfect paradise compared to the wretched loft of the Chouette. Moreover, in prison I learned to sew; but, alas! I was idle: I preferred singing to work, and particularly when the sun was shining. Oh! when it was very fine in the court-yard of the prison, I could not refrain from singing; and then, when I could sing, I fancied I was no longer a prisoner. It was after I began to sing so much that they called me *Goualeuse*, instead of *Pegriotte*. Then, when I was sixteen, I left the prison. At the door I found the ogress, with two or three old women, who had come to see some fellow-prisoners, who had always told me, that when I left the prison they would find some employment for me."

"Ah, good! good! I see," said the Chourineur.

"'My little maid,' said the ogress and the old women, 'come and lodge with us: we will give you nice clothes, and then you may amuse yourself.' I didn't like them, and refused, saying to myself: 'I know how to use my needle very well. and I have two hundred francs by me. I have been eight years in prison, I should like to enjoy myself a little—that will not injure any body: work will come when the money is spent.' And so I began to spend my two hundred francs. Ah! that was my mistake," added Fleur-de-Marie, with a sigh. "I ought first to have got my work: but I hadn't a soul on earth to advise me. At sixteen, to be thrown on the streets of Paris, as I was, one is so lonely; and what is done is done. I have acted wrong, and I have suffered for it. I began then to spend my money: first, I bought flowers to put in my room—I do so love flowers! then I bought a gown, a nice shawl, and I took a walk in the Bois de Boulogne, and I went to St. Germains, Vincennes, and other places in the country. Oh, how I love the country!"

"With a sweetheart, my girl!" asked the Chourineur.

"Oh, my gracious, no! I like to be my own mistress. I took my little excursions with a friend who was in prison with me—a very good little girl: they call her *Rigolette*, because she is always laughing."

"Rigolette! Rigolette! I don't know her," said the Chourineur, who appeared to be charging his memory.

"I didn't think you knew her. I am sure Rigolette conducted herself very properly in prison, and always so gay and so industrious, that she took out with her when she left the prison at least four hundred francs which she had earned. And then she is so precise!—you should see her! When I say I had no one to advise me, I am wrong: I ought to have listened to her: for, after having a week's holiday together, she said to me,: 'Now we have had amusement we ought to search for work, and not spend our money in waste,' I, who was so happy in the fields and the woods—it was just at the close of spring, this year—I answered: 'Oh, I must be idle a little longer, and then I will work very hard.' Since that time I have not seen Rigolette, but I heard a few days since that she was living near the Temple—that she was a famous needlewoman, and earned as much as twenty-five sous a day, and has a small workroom of her own:

but now I could not for the world see her again —I should die with shame if I met her."

"So then, my poor girl," said Rodolph, "you spent your money in the country—you like the country, do you?"

"Like it? I love it! Oh! what would I not give to live there! Rigolette, on the contrary, prefers Paris, and is fond of walking on the Boulevards; but she is so good and so complaisant—she went into the country only to please me."

"And you did not even leave yourself a few sous to live upon whilst you sought for work?" said the Chourineur.

"Yes, I had reserved about fifty francs; but it happened that I had for my washerwoman a person named Lorraine, a poor thing, with none but a kind Providence to protect her. She was then very near her confinement, and yet was obliged all day long to be with her hands and feet in the washing-tub. She was taken ill, and, not being able to work, applied for admittance to a lying-in hospital, but was unsuccessful. She could not work, and the time of her trouble was near at hand, and she had not a sous to pay for the bed in a miserable garret, from which they drove her. Fortunately, one day, at the end of the Pont Notre-Dame, she met with Goubin's wife, who had been hiding for four days in the cellar of a house which was being pulled down behind the Hôtel Dieu ——"

"But why did Goubin's wife hide herself?"

"To escape from her husband, who threatened to kill her; and she only went out at night to buy some bread: it was then that she met with the poor Lorraine, ill, and hardly able to drag herself along, for she was expecting to be confined every hour. Well, it appears this Goubin's wife took her to the cellar where she was hiding —it was barely a shelter—no more. There she shared her bread and straw with poor Lorraine, who gave birth, in this cellar, to a poor little infant—her only covering and bed being a little straw! Well, it seems that Goubin's wife could not bear it, and so, running all risks, even of being killed by her husband, who was looking for her everywhere, she left the cellar in the day-time, and came to me. She knew I had still a little money left, and that I could assist her if I felt inclined; so, when Helmina had told me all about poor Lorraine, who was obliged to lie with her new-born babe on straw, I told her to bring them both to my room directly, and I would take a chamber for her next to mine. So I did; and oh! how happy she was, poor Lorraine! when she found herself in a bed, with her babe by her side, on a little couch which I had bought for her. Helmina and I nursed her till she was strong enough to get about again, and then the rest of my money enabled her to return to her washing."

"And when you had given all your money to Lorraine, what did you do, my child?" inquired Rodolph.

"I then looked out for work; but it was too late. I was a good needlewoman. I had good courage, and thought that I had only to ask for work and get it. Ah! how I deceived myself! I went into a shop where they sell ready-made linen, and asked for work, and as I would not tell a story, I said I had just left prison; on which they showed me the door, without making me any answer. I begged they would give me a trial, but they pushed me into the street as if I had been a thief. Then I remembered, too late, what Rigolette had told me. Little by little, I sold my small stock of clothes and linen, and when all was gone they turned me out of my lodging. I had not tasted food for two days; I did not know where to sleep. At this moment I met the ogress and one of her old women who knew where I lodged, and was always coming after me since I left the prison. They told me they would find me work—and I believed them. I went with them, so exhausted for want of food, that I was almost senseless. They gave me brandy to drink, and—and—here I am!" said the wretched creature, hiding her face in her hands.

"Have you lived for any length of time with the ogress, my poor girl?" asked Rodolph, in accents of deep compassion.

"Six weeks, sir," replied Goualeuse, shuddering as she spoke.

"I understand," said the Chourineur; "I know you now as well as if I were your father and mother, and you had never been from under my eye. Well, well, this is a confession indeed!"

"Telling the story of your life makes you sad, my child," said Rodolph.

"Alas! sir," replied Fleur-de-Marie, sorrowfully, "since my birth, this is the first time that I had remembered all these things at once, and my tale is not a very cheerful one."

"Why not?" said the Chourineur, ironically. "Perhaps you regret that you are not a kitchen-wench in some cook-shop, or a servant to some old brutes who think of nobody but themselves?"

"Ah!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with a deep sigh, "to be quite happy, we must be quite virtuous."

"What a notion! What is your little head about now?" exclaimed the Chourineur, with a loud burst of laughter. "Why not become a candidate for the *rosière*,* for honouring your father and mother whom you never knew?"

"When an infant, my parents left me in the street, as people do ill-bred puppies; perhaps they had not enough to feed themselves," said Goualeuse, with bitterness. "I want nothing of them—I complain of nothing—but there are lots happier than mine."

"Yours! why, what would you have? You are as beautiful as a Venus, and only sixteen and a half; you sing like a nightingale, behave yourself very well, are called Fleur-de-Marie, and yet you complain! But what will you say when you have a stove under your *trotters*, and a chinchilla boa, like the ogress yonder?"

"Oh! I shall never live to be her age."

"Perhaps you have a charm for never growing any older?"

"No; but I could not lead such a life. I have already a bad cough."

"Ah, I can almost fancy I see you already in the '*cold-meat box*.' Go along, do, you silly child."

"Have you often such thoughts as these, Goualeuse?" asked Rodolph.

"Sometimes. You, perhaps, Mr. Rodolph, will understand me. In the morning, when I go to buy my milk from the milkwoman at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, with the sous which the ogress gives me, and see her go away in her little donkey-cart, I often envy her, and I say to myself: 'She is going into the country, to the pure air, to her home, to her family;' and then I return alone and wretched into the garret

* A crown of flowers, given as a reward of virtue.

of the ogress, where you cannot see clearly even at noon-day."

"Never mind, child, be good—laugh at your troubles—be good," said the Chourineur.

"Good! great heaven! and how do you mean be good? The very clothes I wear belong to the ogress, and I owe her for my board and lodging. I can't stir from her; she would have me taken up as a thief. I *belong to her*—I must pay her with myself!"

The poor girl could not help shuddering as she uttered these last horrible words, while a tear trembled in her long eyelashes.

"Well then, remain as you are, and give up comparing yourself to a country milkwoman," said the Chourineur. "Are you taking leave of your senses? Only think, you may still cut a figure in the capital, whilst the milkwoman must boil the pot for her brats, milk her cows, cut grass for her rabbits, and, perhaps, after all, get a black eye from her husband when he comes home from the pothouse. A flattering fate that, and something to boast of, to be sure! Why, it is truly ridiculous to hear you talk of envying her."

The Goualeuse did not venture a reply; her eye was fixed, her heart was full, and her face wore an expression of painful distress. Rodolph had listened with deep interest to this recital, made with such touching frankness. Misery, destitution, ignorance of the world, had weighed down this wretched girl, cast at sixteen years of age on the wide world of Paris!

Rodolph involuntarily thought of a beloved child whom he had lost—a girl, who died at the age of six years, and who, had she yet lived, would have been, like Fleur-de-Marie, sixteen years and a half old. This recollection painfully excited his solicitude for the unhappy creature, whose narration he had just heard.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHOURINEUR'S HISTORY.

The reader will not have forgotten the two guests at the *tapis-franc*, who were watched so closely by the third individual who had entered the cabaret. We have said that one of these men, who had on a Greek cap, and who carefully concealed his left hand, questioned the ogress as to the arrival of the Schoolmaster and Gros Boiteux.

During the story of the Goualeuse, which they could not overhear, these two men had been talking in a very low tone, throwing occasional anxious glances at the door. He who wore the Greek cap said to his comrade: "The Gros Boiteux does not come, nor the Schoolmaster."

"Perhaps the Skeleton has 'settled him,' and made off with the 'swag.'"

"That would be a nice 'go' for us, who 'laid the plant,'* and expect our 'whack,'" replied the other.

The new-comer, who observed the two men, was seated too far off to hear their conversation, but, after having cautiously consulted a small paper concealed at the bottom of his cap, he appeared satisfied with his remarks, rose from the table, and said to the ogress, who was sleeping at the counter, with her feet on the stove, and her great cat on her knees: "I say, Mother Ponisse, I shall soon be back again; take care of my pitcher and my plate; I don't want any one to make free with them."

* Planned or *put up* the robbery.

"Make yourself easy, my lad," said Mother Ponisse; "if your plate and pitcher are empty, no one will meddle with them."

The new-comer laughed heartily at the joke of the ogress, and then slipped out, so that his departure was unnoticed.

At the moment when this man retired, and before the door could be closed, Rodolph saw the charcoal-dealer, whose black face and tall figure we have already alluded to, and he had just time to manifest to him, by an impatient gesture, how much he disliked his watchful attendance; but the charcoal-man did not appear to heed this in the least, and still loitered about the *tapis-franc*.

The countenance of the Goualeuse became still more saddened; with her back to the wall, her head drooping on her bosom, her full blue eyes gazing mechanically about her, the unfortunate being seemed bowed with a heavy weight of painful thoughts. Two or three times, having met Rodolph's fixed look, she turned away, unable to account to herself for the singular impression which the unknown had made upon her. Weighed down and abashed at his presence, she almost regretted having given him so faithful an account of her unhappy life. The Chourineur, on the contrary, was quite in high spirits; he had devoured the whole *harlequin* without the least assistance; the wine and brandy had made him very communicative; the fact of his having found his *master*, as he called him, had been forgotten in the generous conduct of Rodolph; and he also detected so decided a physical superiority, that his humiliation had given way to a sentiment of admiration, mingled with fear and respect. This absence of ill-feeling, and the savage pride with which he boasted of never having robbed, proved that the Chourineur was not as yet a hardened criminal. This had not escaped the sagacity of Rodolph, and he awaited the man's recital with curiosity.

"Now, my boy," said he, "we are listening."

The Chourineur emptied his glass, and commenced thus:—

"You, my poor Goualeuse, was at last picked up by the Chouette, may the devil take her! You never had a shelter until the moment when you were imprisoned as a vagrant. I can never recollect having slept in what is called a bed before I was nineteen years of age—a happy age!—and then I became a trooper."

"You have served then, Chourineur?" said Rodolph.

"Three years; but you'll hear all about it: the stones of the Louvre, the lime-kilns of Clichy, and the quarries of Montrouge, these were the hotels of my youth. Thus, you see, I had my house in Paris and in the country. Who but I——"

"And what was your trade?"

"Upon my faith, master, I have a dim recollection of having strolled about in my childhood with an old rag-picker, who almost knocked the life out of me; and it must be true, for I have never since met one of these old Cupids with a wicker-work quiver, without a desire to give him a bellyful—a proof that one of them must have whacked me when I was a child. My first employment was to help the knackers to cut the horses' throats at Montfauçon. I was about ten or twelve. When I began to slash *(chouriner)* these poor old beasts, it had quite an effect on me. At the end of a month, I thought no more about it; on the contrary, I began to like my trade. No one had his knife so well sharpened

and keen-edged as mine; and that made me rejoice in using it. When I had cut the animals' throats, they gave me for my trouble a piece of the thigh of some animal that had died of disease; for those that they slaughter are sold to the 'cag-mag' shops near the School of Medicine, where it is converted into beef, mutton, veal, or game, according to the taste of the purchasers. Ah! when I got my bit of horse-flesh, I would not call the king my master! I went with it to the lime-kiln like a wolf to his lair, and then, with the leave of the lime-burners, I made a splendid fry on the ashes. When the lime-burners were not at work, I picked up some dry wood at Romainville, set light to it, and broiled my steak under the walls of the bone-house. When thus cooked, the meat certainly was bloody, and almost raw, but that made a change."

"And your name? what did they call you?" asked Rodolph.

"My hair was then more flaxen than now, and the blood was always in my eyes, and so they called me the '*Albino*.' The Albinos are the white rabbits amongst men, and they have red eyes," added the Chourineur, in a grave tone.

"And your parents? your family?"

"My parents? oh! they lodged at the same number as those of the Goualeuse. My birth-place?—why, the first corner of no-matter-what street, either on the right or left-hand side of the way, and either going up or coming down the kennel."

"Then you cursed your father and mother for having deserted you?"

"Why, that would not have set my leg if I had broken it! No matter; though it's true they played me a devilish scurvy trick in bringing me into the world. But I should not have complained if they had made me as beggars ought to be made; that is to say, insensible to cold, hunger, or thirst, which would make it all the easier for beggars to be honest."

"You have been hungry, and thirsty, and have suffered from cold, Chourineur, and yet you have not stolen?"

"No! and I have had my share of misery too. It's a fact, that I have often fasted for two days at a time; that was more than my share. Well, for all that, I never stole."

"For fear of the prison?"

"What a farce!" said the Chourineur, shrugging his shoulders, and indulging in a loud laugh. "I should then not have stolen bread, for fear of getting my *allowance*, eh? I starved as an honest man, as a thief they would have fed me in a prison, and that well too! But I did not steal, because—because—why, because the idea of stealing never came into my mind; so that's all about it!"

This reply, noble as it was in itself, but of the propriety of which the Chourineur himself had no idea, perfectly astonished Rodolph. He felt that the poor fellow who had remained honest in the midst of the most cruel privations, was to be doubly respected, since the punishment of the crime would have been to him a sure resource. Rodolph held out his hand to this ill-used savage of civilisation, whom misery had been unable wholly to corrupt. The Chourineur looked at his host with astonishment—almost with respect; he hardly dared to touch the hand thus proffered to him. He felt impressed with some vague idea that there was a great gulf between Rodolph and himself.

"Good!" said Rodolph to him, "you have heart and honour."

"Heart? honour? I? Ah! now, don't *chaff* me," he replied, with surprise.

"To suffer misery and hunger rather than steal, is to have heart and honour," said Rodolph, with a grave air.

"Well, it may be so," said the Chourineur, as if thinking, "it may be so."

"Does it astonish you?"

"It really does; for people don't usually say such things to me; they generally treat me as they would a mangy dog. It is strange, though, the effect what you say has on me. Heart! honour!" he repeated with an air of pensiveness.

"Well, what ails you?"

"By my faith, I can't tell you," replied the Chourineur, in a tone of emotion; "but these words, do you see, they quite flutter my pulse; and I feel more flattered than if any one told me I was a 'better man' than either the Skeleton or the Schoolmaster. I never felt anything like it. Depend on it, though, that these words, and the blows of the fist at the end of my set-to—you did lay 'em on like a good 'un—without alluding to what you pay for the supper, and the words you have chosen to say—in a word," he exclaimed bluntly, as if he could not find language to express his thoughts, "make sure that in life or death you may reckon on the Chourineur."

Rodolph, unwilling to betray his emotion, replied in a tone as collected as he could assume: "Did you remain long as a knacker's assistant?"

"I believe you! At first I was quite sick of cutting up old worn-out horses who could not even kick; but when I was about sixteen, and my voice began to break, it became a passion—a taste—a relish—a rage with me, to cut and slash. I did not care for any thing but that—not even eating and drinking. You should have seen me in the midst of my work! Except an old pair of woollen trousers, I was quite naked. When, with my large, sharp knife in my hand, I had about me fifteen or twenty horses waiting their turn, thunder! when I began to slaughter them, I don't know what possessed me—I was like a fury. My ears had a singing in them, and I saw every thing *red*—all was red; and I slashed—and slashed—and slashed, until my knife fell from my hands! Thousand thunders! what happiness! Had I had millions, I could have paid them to have revelled in my trade!"

"It is that which has given you the habit of stabbing," said Rodolph.

"Most likely; but when I was turned sixteen, the passion became so strong, that when I once began slashing, I became mad; I spoiled my work; yes, I spoiled the hides; because I slashed and cut them across and across; for I was so furious that I could not see clearly. At length they turned me out of the slaughter-house. I sought employment with the butchers, for I have always liked that sort of business; but they came the grand, and looked upon me as a bootmaker does upon a cobbler. Then I had to seek employment elsewhere, and I didn't find it very readily; and this was the time when my stomach was so often empty. At last I got work in the quarries at Montrouge; but, at the end of two years, I grew tired of going round and round, like a squirrel in his cage, and drawing stone for twenty sous a-day. Being now tall and strong, I enlisted in a regiment. They asked my name, my age, and my papers. My name!—the *Albino*.

My age?—look at my beard. My papers?—here's the certificate of my master the quarryman. As I was a likely fellow for a grenadier, they took me."

"With your strength, courage, and passion for stabbing and slashing, you ought, in war-time, to have been promoted."

"Thunder! what's that you say? What! to stick the English or the Prussians! why, that would have been better than cutting up old horses; but, worse luck, there was no war, and plenty of discipline. If an apprentice tries to punch his master's head, if he be the weaker, why he gets the worst of it; if he be the stronger, he has the best of it; he is turned out of doors, perhaps sent to prison—and that is all. In the army, it is quite another thing. One day our sergeant had blustered a good deal, to make me more attentive—he was right, for I was indolent; I did not fancy a poke he gave me, so I kicked at him—he pushed me; I pushed him again; he collared me, and I gave him a blow with my fist. Some of the men fell upon me, and then my blood was up in my eyes in a moment, and I was mad with rage. I had my knife in my hand—for it took place in the kitchen, where I was on cooking fatigue—and at it I went. I cut, slashed—slashed, chopped, as if I was in the slaughter-house. I ripped up the sergeant, wounded two soldiers—it was a real butchery: I gave eleven wounds among three of them—yes, eleven. Blood flowed, flowed every where, blood, as though we were in the slaughter-house—I swam in it——"

The brigand lowered his head with a sombre, sullen air, and was silent.

"What are you thinking of, Chourineur?" asked Rodolph, with interest.

"Nothing—nothing," he replied hastily; and then, with an air of brutal carelessness, he added: "At last they overpowered me, and took me before the 'beaks,' and I was finally condemned to death."

"You escaped then?"

"No; but I had fifteen years at the galleys, instead of being guillotined. I forgot to tell you, that whilst in the regiment I had saved two of my comrades from drowning in the Marne, when we were quartered at Milan. At another time—you will laugh, and say I am amphibious either in fire or water, when saving men or women—at another time, while in garrison at Rouen, all the wooden houses in one quarter were on fire, and burning like fury. I was one of the fire-guard of the night. They called out to me that there was an old woman who was bed-ridden, and could not escape from her room, which was already in flames. I went towards it. Thunder! how it did burn; it reminded me of the lime-kilns in former days. In a word, I saved the old woman, although I had the very soles of my feet scorched. Thanks to my having done these things, and the blarney of my counsel, my sentence was commuted, and, instead of being guillotined, I was sent to the hulks for fifteen years. When I found that my life would be spared, and that I was to go the galleys, I would have sprung upon my saviour, and twisted his neck, at the moment when he came to wish me joy, and to tell me he had saved my life, confound him! only they prevented me."

"Were you sorry, then, that your punishment was altered?"

"Yes; for those who sport with the knife, the knife is the proper fate; for those who steal, irons upon their 'pickers' and 'toddlers'—each his appropriate punishment. But to force you to live amongst galley-slaves, when you are entitled to be guillotined out of hand, is unjust; and, besides, my life, when I first went to the hulks, was rather queer: one doesn't kill a man and forget it easily, understand."

"You have felt remorse, then, Chourineur?"

"Remorse? Oh, no; for I have served my time," said the savage; "but at first a night did not pass but I saw—like a nightmare—the sergeant and soldiers whom I slashed and slaughtered; that is, they were not alone," added the brigand, with a horrid shudder; "they were in tens, and dozens, and hundreds, and thousands, each waiting his turn, in a kind of slaughter-house, like the horses whose throats I used to cut at Montfauçon, waiting each his turn. Then, then I saw *red*, and began to cut and slash away on these men, as I used formerly to do on the horses. The more, however, I hacked down the soldiers, the faster the ranks filled up with others; and as they died, they looked at one with an air so kind—so gentle, that I cursed myself for killing them; but I couldn't help it. That was not all! I never had a brother; and yet it seemed as if every one of those whom I killed was my brother, and I loved all of them. At last, when I could bear it no longer, I used to wake covered with sweat, as cold as melting snow."

"That was a horrible dream, Chourineur!"

"Oh, yes—yes. That dream, do you know, was enough to drive one mad or foolish; so, twice, I tried to kill myself: once by swallowing verdigris, and another time, by trying to choke myself with my chain; but, thunder! I am as strong as a young bull. The verdigris only made me thirsty; and as for the twist of the chain round my neck, why that merely gave me a natural blue cravat; afterwards, the desire for life returned to me, my nightmare ceased to torment me, and I did as others did."

"At the hulks, you were in a good school for learning to thieve?"

"Yes, but it didn't suit me. The other coves bullied me; but I soon silenced them with a few hits of my chain. It was in this way I first knew the Schoolmaster, and I must pay him the compliment due to his science—he settled with me as you did some little time ago."

"He is, then, a liberated convict?"

"He was sentenced for life, but made his escape."

"Made his escape, and not denounced?"

"It is not for me to denounce him. Besides, it would look like being afraid of him."

"But how is it that he is not detected by the police? Have they not got his description?"

"His description? Oh! yes, yes; but he has long since got rid of the marks that Nature put upon his phiz; now, none but the devil himself could recognise the Schoolmaster."

"How has he managed that?"

"He began by shortening his nose, which was a yard long: he did that by eating it away with vitriol."

"You are joking."

"If he comes in this evening, you'll see. He had a nose like a parrot, and now it is like one in a death's head; his lips, besides, are as thick as your fist, and his face is as full of wrinkles as a bone-grubber's coat."

"Then he is not recognisable?"

"It is six months since he escaped from Roche-

fort, and the 'traps' have met him a hundred times without detecting him."

"What was he sent to the hulks for?"

"For forgery, theft, and murder. He is called the Schoolmaster because he writes a good hand, and has had a tolerable education."

"And he is much dreaded?"

"He will be so no longer, when you have given him such a licking as you gave me. Oh, thunder! I long to see it!"

"What does he do for a living?"

"He is associated with an old woman as bad as himself, and deep as 'old Nick;' but she never shows, though he has told the ogress that some day or other he would bring his 'mot' (woman) with him."

"And this woman assists him in his robberies?"

"Yes, and in his murders too. They say he brags of having already, with her help, made 'stiff-uns' of two or three people; and, amongst others, three weeks ago, a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy, whom they also robbed."

"He will be taken sooner or later."

"It will require both 'nouse' and strength to do that, for he always has under his blouse a brace of loaded pistols and a dagger. He says that Charlot (the executioner) waits for him, and he can only lose his head once, and so he will kill all he can kill, in order to escape. Oh! he makes no secret of that, and as he is twice as strong as you and I, they will have a tough job who take him."

"And when you left the hulks, what did you do, Chourineur?"

"Offered myself to a master lighterman of St. Paul's Quay, where I now get my living."

"But as you have never been a 'prig,' why do you live in the City?"

"And where would you have me live? Who likes to be seen with a discharged convict? I should be tired of always being alone, for I like company, and here I am with my equals. I kick up a dust sometimes, and they fear me as they do fire in the City; but the police say nothing to me, except now and then for a row, for which they give me, perhaps, twenty-four hours at the lock-up, and there's an end of it."

"And how much do you earn a-day?"

"Thirty-five sous for taking in the river foot-baths, up to the middle from twelve to fifteen hours a day, summer and winter; but let me be just, and true; so if, through having my toes in the water, I get the *grenouille*,* I am allowed to break my arms in breaking up old vessels, and carrying timber on my back. I begin as a beast of burden, and end like the tail of a fish." When my strength fails me, I shall take a rake and a wicker-basket, like the old rag-picker whom I see in the visions of my childhood."

"With all this, you are not unhappy?"

"There are worse than I am; and without my dream of the sergeant and soldiers with their throats cut—for I have the dream still sometimes—I could quietly wait for the moment when I should drop down dead at the corner of some muck-heap, like that at which I was born; but the dream—thunder and lightning! I can't bear even to think of that," said the Chourineur, and he knocked the ashes out of the bowl of his pipe at a corner of the table.

The Goualeuse had been an inattentive listener to the Chourineur; she seemed absorbed in a deep and painful reverie. Rodolph himself remained pensive. A tragical incident occurred, which brought these three personages to a recollection of the spot in which they were.

* A disease of the skin, prevalent among those employed in the water.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARREST.

The man who had gone out for a moment, after having requested the ogress to look after his jug and plate, soon returned, accompanied by a tall, brawny man, to whom he said: "It was a chance to meet in this way, old pal! Come in, and let us have a glass of wine together."

The Chourineur whispered to Rodolph and the Goualeuse, pointing to the new comer: "We shall have a row presently; he's a 'trap.' Mind your eye!"

The two bandits, one of whom, with the Greek scull-cap pulled over his brows, had inquired several times for the Schoolmaster and the Gros Boiteux, exchanged rapid glances, and, rising suddenly from the table, went together towards the door; but the two police-officers, on a given signal, seized them. A terrible struggle ensued. The door of the tavern opened, and all the policemen rushed into the room, whilst, outside, were seen the muskets of the *gens d'armes*. Taking advantage of the tumult, the charcoal-seller, of whom we have spoken, advanced to the threshold of the *tapis-franc*, and, meeting the eye of Rodolph, he placed the forefinger of his right hand on his lips. Rodolph, with a gesture as rapid as it was authoritative, desired him to go, and then turned to the scene passing before him. The man with the Greek scull-cap yelled with rage, and half extended on a table, struggled so desperately, that three men could scarcely hold him. His companion, overcome, dejected, with livid face, and white lips, his lower jaw drooping, and shaking convulsively, made no resistance, but held out his hands to receive the handcuffs. The ogress, seated at her bar, and accustomed to such scenes, remained motionless, with her hands in the pockets of her apron.

"What have these two fellows been up to, my dear Mister Narcisse Borel?" she inquired of one of the policemen whom she knew.

"Murdered an old woman yesterday, in the Rue St. Christophe, and plundered her room. Before she died, the poor old creature said that she had bitten one of her murderers in the hand. We had our eyes on these two villains, and my comrade, having come just now to make sure of his men, why, we have made free to take them."

"Luckily, they paid me in advance for their pint!" said the ogress. "Will you take a glass of anything, Mr. Narcisse? A drop of 'Ratifia of the Column?"

"Thanks, Mother Ponisse, but I must take care of my prisoners; one fellow shows fight still."

The assassin in the Greek cap was furious with rage, and when they tried to get him into a hackney-coach which was waiting in the street, he resisted so stoutly, that they were obliged to carry him. His accomplice, seized with a nervous tremor, could hardly support himself, and his livid lips trembled as though he were speaking. They threw him, helpless and unresisting, into the vehicle. Before he left the *tapis-franc*, the principal officer looked attentively at the other guests assembled, and said to the Chourineur, in a tone approaching to kindness: "What, are you here, my rum-un? Why, it is a long time

since we heard anything of you. What, no more shindies? Are you growing steady?"

"Steady as a stone image. Why, you know that I never 'crack a nob' now, even if I am asked to do so!"

"Oh, I think you could manage that without much trouble, steady as you may be."

"Yet here is my master," said the Chourineur, laying his hand on Rodolph's shoulder.

"Stay, I do not know him," said the police-officer, looking steadfastly at Rodolph.

"And I do not think we shall make acquaintance now," replied he.

"I hope not, for your sake, my boy," said the officer; then turning to the ogress: "Good night, Mother Ponisse; your *tapis-franc* is a regular mouse-trap: this is the third murderer I have 'grabbed' here."

"I hope it won't be the last, Mr. Narcisse; my 'crib' is quite at your service," said the ogress, with an insinuating nod, accompanied by one of her blandest smiles.

When the police had left, the young man with the haggard countenance, who was smoking, and drinking brandy, refilled his pipe, and said in a hoarse voice to the Chourineur: "Didn't you *twig* the *bloak* in the Greek cap? he's Boulotte's man. When I saw the 'traps' walk in, I said to myself: 'There's something brewing;' and then I observed he carefully concealed his hand under the table."

"The Schoolmaster and the Gros Boiteux were lucky in not being here," said the ogress. "Greek-cap asked for him twice, saying they had some business together; but I never 'nose' upon my customers. If they take them, well and good—every one for himself; but I never split on them as does right to me. Talk of the devil, and you are safe to see his horns," added the ogress, as at the moment a man and woman entered the cabaret; "here they are—the Schoolmaster and his woman. Oh, lawks! he did right not to show her, for I never clapt my eyes on such an ugly 'mug' in my life! She ought to be very much obliged to him for his fancy."

At the name of the Schoolmaster, a sort of cold shudder seemed to circulate amongst the guests of the *tapis-franc*. Rodolph himself, in spite of his natural intrepidity, could not wholly subdue a slight emotion at the sight of this redoubtable ruffian, whom he contemplated for an instant with mixed feelings of curiosity and horror. The Chourineur had spoken truly, when he said that the Schoolmaster was frightfully mutilated. The imagination cannot conceive anything more horribly repugnant than the countenance of this man, furrowed in all directions with deep, livid cicatrices. The corrosive action of the vitriol had puffed out his lips; the cartilages of his nose were divided, and two misshapen holes supplied the loss of nostrils. His grey eyes were bright, small, circular, and sparkled with ferocity; his forehead, as flat as that of a tiger, was half hidden beneath a fur cap, with long yellow hair, looking like the crest of a monster.

The Schoolmaster was not more than five feet four or five; his head, which was disproportionately large, was buried between two shoulders, broad, powerful, and fleshy, displaying themselves even under the loose folds of his coarse cotton blouse; he had long, muscular arms, hands short, thick, and hairy to the very fingers' end, with legs somewhat bowed, whose enormous calves betokened his vast strength. This man presented, in fact, the exaggeration of what there is of short, thick-set, and condensed, in the type of the Hercules Farnese. As to the expression of ferocity which suffused his hideous mask, and the restless, wild, and glaring look, more like a wild beast than a human being, it is impossible to depict them.

The woman who accompanied the Schoolmaster was old, and rather neatly dressed in a brown gown, with a plaid shawl of red and black check, and a white bonnet. Rodolph caught her profile, and her green eye, hooked nose, skinny lips, sharp chin, and countenance at once wicked and cunning, reminded him involuntarily of La Chouette, that horrible woman who had made poor Fleur-de-Marie her victim. He was just about remarking this to the girl, when he saw her suddenly turn pale with fright, whilst looking at the hideous companion of the Schoolmaster, and seizing the arm of Rodolph with a trembling hand, the Goualeuse said, in a low voice: "Oh, the Chouette! the Chouette!—the one-eyed woman!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster, after having exchanged a few words in a whisper with Barbillon, came leisurely to the table where Rodolph, the Goualeuse, and the Chourineur were sitting, and addressing himself to Fleur-de-Marie, in a hoarse voice, said: "Ah, I say, my pretty miss, you must leave these two *muffs*, and come with me."

The Goualeuse, making no reply, pressed more closely to Rodolph, her teeth chattering with fright.

"And I shall not be jealous of my man, my little *fourline*" (a pet term for assassin), added the Chouette, bursting into a loud laugh. She had not yet recognised in Goualeuse the 'Pegriotte,' her old victim.

"Well, my little white-face, do you hear me?" said the monster, advancing. "If you don't come, I'll poke your eye out, and make you a match for the Chouette. And you with the moustache," said he, addressing Rodolph, "if you don't stand from between me and the wench, I'll smash you!"

"Oh, mercy, mercy! defend me!" cried Goualeuse to Rodolph, clasping her hands. Then, reflecting that she was about to expose him to great danger, she added, in a low voice: "No, no, do not move, Mister Rodolph; if he approaches me, I will cry out for help, and, for fear of attracting the notice of the police, the ogress will take my part."

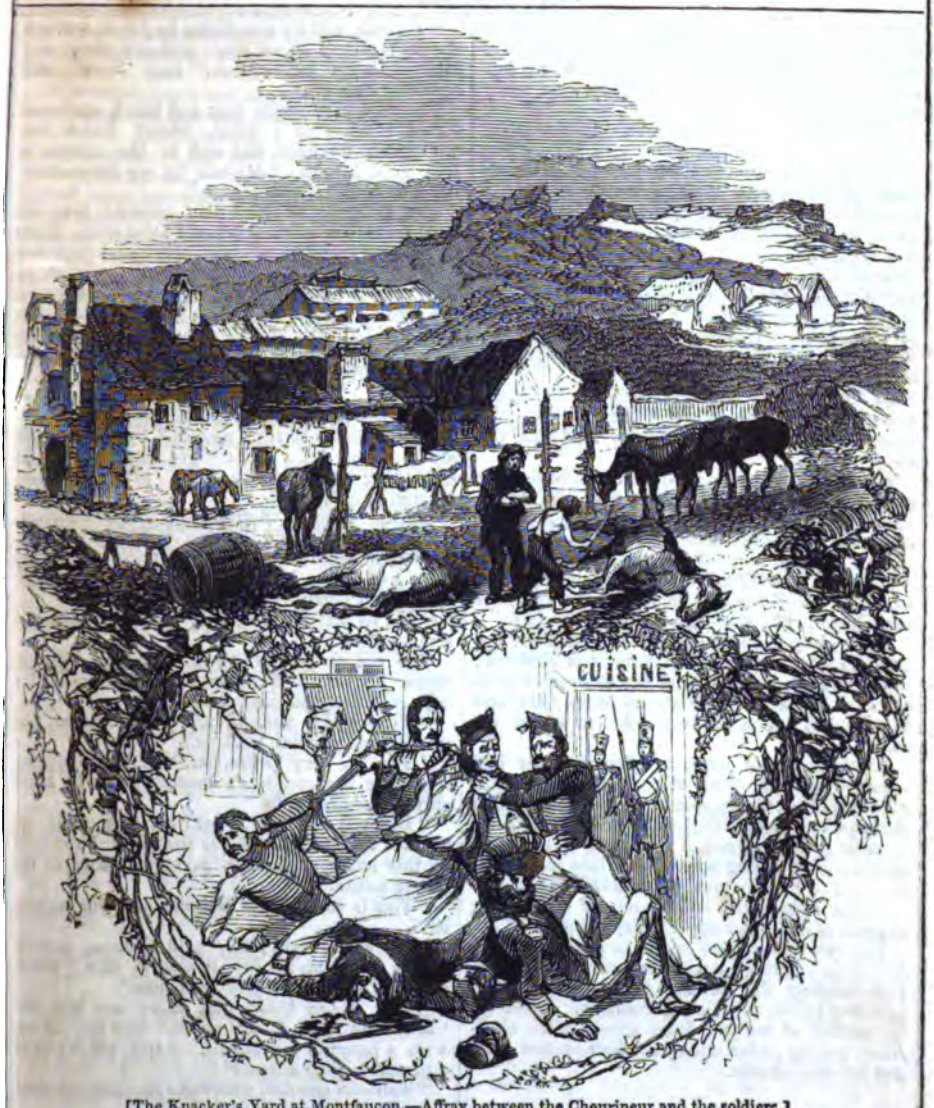
"Be quiet, my child," said Rodolph, looking calmly at the Schoolmaster; "you are beside me—don't stir; and as this ill-looking scoundrel causes us to feel uncomfortable, why I will kick him out."

"You!" said the Schoolmaster.

"I!" replied Rodolph. And, in spite of the efforts of the Goualeuse to prevent him, he rose from the table.

Despite his hardihood, the Schoolmaster retreated a step or two at the terrible expression of firmness and command displayed by Rodolph. There are certain glances of the eye which are irresistible, and several celebrated duellists are said to owe their bloody triumphs to this fascinating power, which unmans, paralyses, and destroys their adversaries. The Schoolmaster trembled, and, for once, distrustful of his giant strength, felt under his blouse for his long cut-and-thrust knife. A murder would have stained the *tapis-franc*, no doubt, if the Chouette, taking the Schoolmaster by the arm, had not screamed

THE SCHOOLMASTER.



[The Knacker's Yard at Montfauçon.—Affray between the Chourineur and the soldierr.]

out: "A minute, a minute, *fourline*—hear what I have got to say; you shall walk into those two *muffs* all the same, presently."

The Schoolmaster looked at her with astonishment. For some minutes she had been gazing at Fleur-de-Marie with fixed and increasing attention, as if trying to refresh her memory. At length, her doubts were cleared up, and she recognised the Goualeuse.

"Is it possible?" shrieked the one-eyed wretch, clasping her hands in astonishment. "It is Pegriotte, who stole my barley-sugar. But where have you sprung from? Is it the devil who has sent you?" and she shook her clenched hand at the young girl. "You won't come into my clutch again, won't you? But be easy; if I do not pull out your teeth, I will have out of your eyes every tear in your body. Come, no airs and graces You don't know what I mean. Why, I have found out the people who had you before you were handed over to me. The Schoolmaster saw at the galleys the man who brought you to my *crib* when you were a brat, and he has proofs that the people who had you first were '*gentry coves*.'"

"My parents! do you know them?" cried Fleur-de-Marie.

"Never mind whether I know them or not, you shall know nothing about it. The secret is mine and my *fourline's*, and I will tear out his tongue rather than he shall blab it. Ha! it makes you blubber, does it, Pegriotte?"

"Oh, no," said Goualeuse, with a bitterness of accent; "now I do not care ever to know my parents."

Whilst La Chouette was speaking, the Schoolmaster had resumed his assurance, for, looking at Rodolph, he could not believe that a young man of such slight and graceful make could for a moment cope with him, and, confident in his

brute have so approached the defender of La Camaraise, and said to the Chouette, in a tone of menace: "How you say? I—smash this immense swell—and then the fair lady may fancy me a gentleman."

With one bound Rodolph leaped on the table.

"Take care of my pates!" roared the ogress.

The schoolmaster stood on the defensive, his arms were bent, his chest advanced, and firmly planted on his legs, which resembled balusters of stone. At the moment Rodolph sprang at him, the door of the tapis-franc was violently opened, and the charcoal-man, before mentioned, and who was upwards of six feet high, rushed into the apartment, pushed the schoolmaster on one side, and coming up to Rodolph, whispered in his ear, in German: "Monseigneur, the countess and her brother—they are at the end of the street."

At these words, Rodolph made an impatient and angry gesture, threw a louis d'or on the counter of the ogress, and hastily made for the door.

The schoolmaster attempted to arrest Rodolph's progress, but he, turning round, gave him two or three rapid blows with his fists over the nose and eyes, and with such a stunning effect, that the latter staggered, and fell heavily against a table.

"Vive le Chaos! these are my blows, and no mistake!" cried the Chourineur; "two or three more blows like that, and I shall be up to it."

Recovering himself after a few seconds, the schoolmaster rushed off in pursuit of Rodolph, but he had disappeared with the charcoal-man in the dark labyrinth of the streets of the City, and the brigand found it impossible to follow his steps.

At the moment when the Schoolmaster had returned, foiling with rage, two persons, approaching from the opposite side to that by which Rodolph had disappeared, entered the tapis-franc in great haste, and out of breath, as if they had been running a long way. Their first movement was to cast a hasty glance round the room.

"How unfortunate!" said one of them; "he is gone, and another opportunity is lost."

The two new-comers spoke in English. The Goualeuse, terrified at meeting with the Chouette, and dreading the threats of the Schoolmaster, profiting by the tumult and confusion caused by the arrival of the two fresh guests in the tapis-franc, quietly glided out by the half-opened door, and left the cabaret.

CHAPTER VI.

THOMAS SEYTON AND THE COUNTESS SARAH.

The two persons who now entered the tapis-franc belonged to a totally different class from those who generally frequented it. One, tall and erect, had hair almost white, black eyebrows and whiskers, a long, sallow face, with a stiff, formal air. His long frock-coat was buttoned up to the throat, in military style. We shall call this personage Thomas Seyton. His companion was young, pale, and handsome, and appeared about thirty-three or thirty-four years of age. His hair, eyebrows, and eyes, were of a deep black, which contrasted strongly with the pure whiteness of his face. By his step, the smallness of his stature, and the delicacy of his features, it was easy to detect in this person a woman in man's attire.

The female was the Countess Sarah Macgregor. We will hereafter inform our readers of the motives and events which had brought the countess and her brother into this cabaret of the City.

"Thomas, call for something to drink, and as the people here about him; perhaps they may give us some information," said Sarah, still speaking English.

The man with white hair and black eyebrows seated himself at a table, whilst Sarah was wiping her forehead, and said to the ogress, in very good French: "Madam, let us have something to drink, if you please."

The entrance of these two persons into the tapis-franc had excited general attention. Their dress, their manners, at once announced that they never frequented low public-houses; whilst, by their restless manner and disturbed countenances, it might be judged that some very powerful motives had led them to this quarter. The Chourineur, the Schoolmaster, and the Chouette, looked on them with eager curiosity.

Surprised at the appearance of such strange guests, the ogress shared in the general bewilderment. Thomas Seyton, a second time, said with an impatient tone, said: "We have asked for something to drink, madam; pray be good enough to serve us."

Mother Pontas, flattered by their courtesy left her counter, and, coming towards her new customers, leaned her fists on their table, and said: "Will you have a pint of wine in measure, or a sealed bottle?"

"Let us have a bottle of wine, glasses, and some water."

The ogress served them. Thomas Seyton threw her a five-frane piece, and refused the change, which she offered to him.

"Keep it for yourself, my good hostess, and take a glass of wine with us."

"You are very polite, sir," said the ogress regarding the countess's brother with as much surprise as gratitude.

"But tell me, now," said he, "we had appointed to meet one of our friends in a cabaret in this street, and have, perhaps, come to the wrong house."

"This is the 'White Rabbit,' at your service, sir."

"Oh, that's right then," said Thomas, making a sign to Sarah; "yes, it was at the 'White Rabbit' that we were to meet him."

"And I can boast that there are not two 'White Rabbits' in this street," said the ogress, with a haughty movement. "But what sort of a person is your friend?"

"Tall and slender, with light chesnut-coloured hair and moustache," said Seyton.

"Ah, to be sure; that's the man who was here just now. A charcoal-man, very tall and stout, came in and said a few words to him, and they went out together."

"The very man we are in search of," said Tom.

"And were they alone here?" demanded Sarah.

"Why, the charcoal-man only came in for a moment, but your comrade supped here with Goualeuse and the Chourineur;" and the ogress glanced towards the individual of the party who still remained in the cabaret.

Thomas and Sarah turned towards the Chourineur. After contemplating him for a few moments, Sarah said, in English, to her companion: "Do you know this man?"

During this conversation, held in a low tone, and in a foreign language, the Schoolmaster said to the Chouette, glancing at Tom and Sarah: "The *swell* has *dropped* a hundred sous to the ogress. It is just about twelve, and rains and blows like the devil. When they *scamsh*, we'll

be after 'em, and *ease* the *flat* of his blunt. As he's got his woman with him, he's safe not to *holler*."

If Tom and Sarah had heard this foul language, they would not have understood it, and therefore would not have detected the plot hatching against them.

"Be quiet, *fourline*," replied the Chouette; "if the *nat* sings out for the *traps*, I have my vitriol in my pocket, and will break the phial in her *mazzard*—nothing like drink to quiet crying children," she added. "But tell me, *fourline*, shall we not *grub* Pegriotte the first time we come across her? If we can once get her to our *crib*, a little of my vitriol will cure her of being too proud of herself for the future."

"Capital, Chouette! I am determined to marry you some day or other," said the Schoolmaster; "for courage and ability, your equal is not to be found. I made up my mind about that, on the night of the grazier's business. 'That's the woman for me,' said I; 'she works better than a man.'"

"And you said right, *fourline*; for if the Skeleton had had a woman like me for a *pal*, he wouldn't have been caught making a knife-case of the *dead-'un's* windpipe."

"It's all up with him now, and there's not much chance of his leaving the *fag*, till he comes out to be made a head shorter."

"What strange language these people talk!" said Sarah, who had involuntarily heard the last few words of the conversation between the Schoolmaster and the Chouette. She then added, pointing to the Chourineur: "If we question this man about Rodolph, perhaps he may be able to answer us."

"We can but try," answered Thomas, who said to the Chourineur: "Comrade, we expected to find a friend of ours here; he supped in this cabaret with you, it seems. Perhaps, as you know him, you can tell us which way he went?"

"I know him because he gave me a jolly good *licking* two hours ago, in defence of the Goualeuse."

"And had you never seen him before?"

"Never; we met by chance in the alley which leads to the house of Bras Rouge."

"Hostess, another bottle of the best," said Thomas Seyton.

Sarah and he had hardly moistened their lips from their still full glasses; but Mother Ponisse, all anxiety, no doubt, to pay proper respect to her cellar, had filled and emptied hers several times.

"And put it on the table where that gentleman sits, if he will allow it," added Thomas, who, with Sarah, seated themselves beside the Chourineur, who seemed as much astonished as flattered by such politeness.

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette continued to converse in a low tone, on their sinister projects.

The bottle being brought, and Sarah and her brother having seated themselves with the Chourineur and the ogress, who had considered a second invitation quite superfluous, the conversation was resumed.

"You told us, my good fellow, that you met our friend Rodolph in the house where Bras Rouge lives?" inquired Thomas Seyton, touching glasses with the Chourineur.

"Yes, sir," replied he, as he emptied his glass at a mouthful.

"A very singular name—Bras Rouge! What is this Bras Rouge in the way of business?"

"*Il pastique la maltouze*,"* said the Chourineur in a careless tone; and then he added: "This is famous wine, Mother Ponisse!"

"If you think so, do not spare it, my brave fellow," said Seyton, filling the Chourineur's glass.

"Here's to your health," said he, "and that of your little friend, who—but mum's the word. 'If my aunt was a man, she'd be my uncle,' as the saying is. Ah, Mr. Slyboots, I'm *fly* to you!"

Sarah coloured slightly, and her brother continued: "I did not exactly understand you about Bras Rouge. Rodolph came out of his house, no doubt?"

"I told you that Bras Rouge *pastiquait la maltouze*."

Thomas looked at the Chourineur with surprise, and said: "What do you mean by *pastiquer la mal*—— What do you call it?"

"*Pastiquer la maltouze*. He 'does the contraband,' I suppose you would say; but it seems you can't *patter flash*?"

"My good fellow, I don't understand you."

"I see you can't come the *slang* like Mr. Rodolph."

"Slang?" said Thomas Seyton, looking at Sarah with an air of astonishment.

"Ah! you are *flats*; but comrade Rodolph is an *out-and-out pal*, he is. Although he's only a fan-painter, yet he is as *down* as a hammer. However, since you can't speak this beautiful language, I tell you, in plain French, that Bras Rouge is a smuggler, and, more than that, has a small tavern in the Champs Elysées. I say, without splitting upon him, that he is a smuggler, for he makes no secret of it, but owns it under the very nose of the custom-house officers. Find him out though, if you can; Bras Rouge is a clever fellow."

"And what could Rodolph want at the house of this man?" asked Sarah.

"Really, sir, or madam, which you please, I know nothing about anything, as true as I drink this glass of wine. To-night, I was joking with the Goualeuse, who thought I was going to beat her, and she ran up the alley of Bras Rouge's house, and I followed her: it was as dark as the devil. Instead of hitting Goualeuse, I stumbled on Master Rodolph, who gave me my change in rare coin! Oh, yes, especially the rattle of blows at the finish. My eyes! he did lay them on! But he's promised to teach me the move, and to——"

"And Bras Rouge, what sort of a man is he?" asked Tom. "What does he sell?"

"Bras Rouge? Oh, s'help me! he sells everything he is forbidden to sell, and does everything which is forbidden to be done. That's his trade, eh, Mother Ponisse?"

"Oh! he's a boy with more than one string to his bow," answered the ogress. "He is, besides, principal occupier of a certain house in the Rue du Temple—a queer sort of a crib, to be sure; but that's neither here nor there," added she, fearful of having said too much already.

"And what is the address of Bras Rouge in that street?" asked Thomas Seyton of the Chourineur.

"No. 13, sir."

"Perhaps we may learn something there," said Seyton, in a low voice, to his sister. I will send Karl, to-morrow."

"As you know Mr. Rodolph," said the Chou-

*"*Il pastique la maltouze*, meaning "He smuggles."

rineur, "you may boast the acquaintance of a staunch friend and a good fellow. Had it not been for the charcoal-man, he would have *smashed* the Schoolmaster, who is there in the corner with the Chouette. Blood and thunder! I can hardly keep my hands off the old wretch, when I think of her treatment of La Goualeuse ——but patience, a blow delayed is not a blow lost, as the saying is."

Midnight sounded from the Hôtel de Ville. The lamp of the tavern shed but a dim and flickering light. With the exception of the Chourineur and his two companions, the Schoolmaster and the Chouette, all the guests of the *tapis-franc* had retired one after the other.

The Schoolmaster said, in an undertone, to the Chouette: "If we go and hide in the alley opposite, we shall be able to *gun* the *swells* when they come out, and know which way to follow them. If they turn to the left, we will wait for them at the corner of the Rue Saint-Eloi; if they go to the right, we will meet them by the ruins close to the tripe-market. There's a large hole close by, and I have an out-and-out idea."

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette then went towards the door.

"You won't *wet your whistles* to-night, then?" said the ogress.

"No, Mother Ponisse, we only came in to shelter from the weather," said the Schoolmaster, as he went out with the Chouette.

CHAPTER VII.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!"

The noise made by the shutting of the door aroused Tom and Sarah from their reverie; they rose, and, having thanked the Chourineur for the information he had given them, the fellow went out, the wind blowing with redoubled violence, and the rain falling in torrents.

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, hidden in an alley opposite the *tapis-franc*, saw the Chourineur proceeding on that side of the street in which the ruined house was situated. Very soon, his steps, rendered somewhat irregular by the frequent libations of the evening, were unheard amidst the whistling of the storm and the sheets of rain which dashed against the walls.

Tom and Sarah left the tavern, in spite of the tempest, and took a direction opposite to that of the Chourineur.

"It's all up with them," whispered the Schoolmaster to the Chouette; "out with your vitriol, and mind what you're about."

Let us take off our shoes, and they won't hear us follow them," responded the Chouette.

"You are right—always right; let us tread like cats, my old darling."

The hideous couple took off their shoes, and glided stealthily along, in the shadow of the houses. Owing to this stratagem, they followed so lightly, that although within a few steps of Tom and Sarah, they did not hear them.

"Fortunately our hackney coach is at the end of the street, or we should get wet through. Are you not cold, Sarah?"

"Perhaps we shall be able to obtain some information from the smuggler, this Bras Rouge," said Sarah, in a pensive tone, without noticing her brother's question.

Tom suddenly stopped, and said: "I have taken the wrong street; I ought to have gone to the right on leaving the tavern; we must pass a house in ruins, to reach the hackney coach. We must retrace our steps."

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, who had followed on the heels of their intended victims, retreated into the dark doorway of a house close by, unperceived by Tom and Sarah, who, on turning back, almost touched them as they passed.

"Strike me lucky!" whispered the Schoolmaster," I'm glad they're gone that way, for if the *swell* is troublesome, I have an idea of my own."

Sarah and her brother, having again passed the *tapis-franc*, arrived close by the dilapidated house, the unroofed cellars of which formed a kind of gulf on the line of street in that direction. Quick as thought, the Schoolmaster, with a bound as strong and agile as that of a tiger, seized Seyton with one of his enormous hands by the throat, and exclaimed: "Your money, or I will throw you into this hole!"

Then the brigand, pushing Seyton backwards, threw him off his balance, and with one hand held him suspended over the mouth of the deep excavation; whilst with his other hand, he grasped the arm of Sarah, as if in a vice. Before Tom could make any movement, the Chouette had emptied his pockets with marvellous dexterity. Sarah did not utter a cry, nor offer the slightest resistance: she only said in a calm tone: "Give up your purse, brother;" and then addressing the brigand: "We will make no noise, do not ill-treat us."

The Chouette, having very carefully searched the pockets of the two victims of this ambush, said to Sarah: "Let's see your hands, if you've got any rings. No," said the old wretch, grumblingly, "no, not one—what poverty!"

Tom Seyton did not lose his presence of mind during this scene, as rapid as it was unexpected.

"Will you strike a bargain? My pocket-book contains papers quite useless to you; return it to me, and to-morrow I will give you twenty-five louis," said Tom to the Schoolmaster, whose hand slightly relaxed its fierce gripe.

"Oh, ah! you want to trap us, do you!" replied the robber. "Be off, and don't look behind you; you may thank your stars for getting away so well."

"One moment," said the Chouette; "if he behaves like a gentleman, he shall have his pocket-book. There is a way." Then, addressing Thomas Seyton: "You know the plain of St. Denis?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where St. Ouen is?"

"Yes."

"Opposite St. Ouen, at the end of the road of La Revolte, there is a level plain. Across the fields one may see a long way. Come there to-morrow morning, by yourself, bring your money with you, and you will find me and the pocket-book ready. Tip me the cash, and I will give up the pocket-book."

"But he'll have you *nippered*."*

Not a bit of it! I'll be even with him. I've only one eye, but that's a piercer; and if the *swell* comes with a *pal*, he'll not find me; I shall have *hooked it*."†

A sudden idea seemed to strike Sarah, and she said to the brigand: "Will you gain some money?"

"Yes."

* Apprehended.
† Gone away.

"Did you see, in the cabaret we have just left—for I know you again—the person whom the charcoal-man came in search of?"

"A *cove* with moustaches? Yes, I would have given him a *steel draught*,* if he had waited long enough. He stunned me with two blows of his fists, and knocked me over the table—the first time that any man ever served me so. Curse him! but I will be revenged."

"He is the man I mean," said Sarah.

"*Is he?*" cried the Schoolmaster, "a thousand *francs*, and I'll *make him scarce*."

"Wretch! I do not seek his life," replied Sarah to the Schoolmaster.

"What do you want then?"

"Come to-morrow to the plain of St. Denis; you will there find my companion," she replied: "you will see that he is alone, and he will tell you what to do. If you succeed, I will give you not one, but two thousand francs."

"*Fourline*," said the Chouette, in a low tone, to the Schoolmaster, "there's *blunt* to be earned; these are a *nobby lot*, who want to give a turn to an enemy, and that enemy is the *bouncing cove* you want to *smash*. Let's go to the place and meet him. Two thousand francs! My eyes!—they are worth looking after!"

"Well, my woman shall come," said the Schoolmaster; "you will tell her what you want, and I shall see——"

"Be it so, to-morrow at one."

"At one o'clock."

"In the plain of St. Denis?"

"In the plain of St. Denis."

"Between St. Ouen and the road of La Revolte, at the end of the road?"

"Agreed."

"I will return you the pocket-book."

"And you shall have the five hundred francs I promised you, and we will settle about the other affair, if you are reasonable."

"Now then, you go to the right, and we to the left. Don't attempt to follow us, or else——" And the Schoolmaster and the Chouette hurried off, whilst Tom and the countess went in a contrary direction, towards Notre Dame.

An invisible witness had been present during this scene: it was the Chourineur, who had entered the cellars of the house to shelter from the rain. The proposal which Sarah had made to the brigand respecting Rodolph deeply interested the Chourineur. Alarmed at the perils which threatened his new *friend*, he regretted he could not guard him against them. His hatred of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette might have something to do with this feeling.

The Chourineur resolved to warn Rodolph of the danger which threatened him; but how was he to do so? He had forgotten the address of the self-styled fan-painter. Rodolph might never again visit the *tapis-franc*, and then how could he inform him? Whilst thus reflecting, the Chourineur had mechanically followed Tom and Sarah, and saw them get into a coach which was waiting near Notre Dame. The coach started. The Chourineur jumped up behind, and at one o'clock it stopped on the Boulevard of the Observatory, and Thomas and Sarah disappeared down one of the narrow streets adjacent. The night was very dark. The Chourineur could recognise nothing, and that he might know, the next day, the place where he then was, he drew from his pocket his clasp-knife, and cut a large and deep notch in one of the trees at the corner of the entrance. He then returned to his lodging, which was at a considerable distance.

For the first time during a long period, the Chourineur tasted the sweets of a deep sleep, which was not once interrupted by the horrible vision of the "*Sergeant's slaughter-house*," as, in his peculiar language, he called it.

* Stabbed him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WALK.

On the morrow of the evening on which the different events we have described had passed, a bright autumnal sun shone in the midst of a pure sky; the tempest of the previous night had wholly disappeared. Although always obscured by the height of the houses, the filthy neighbourhood into which the reader has accompanied us, seemed less horrible in the light of a fine day.

Whether Rodolph no longer feared to meet the two persons whom he had shunned the over-night, or did not care any longer to evade them, about eleven o'clock in the morning, he entered the Rue aux Fêves, and made his way towards the tavern of the ogress.

Rodolph was still dressed as a workman; but there was a remarkable neatness in his costume. His new blouse, open at the chest, disclosed a red woollen shirt, studded with several silver buttons; whilst the collar of another shirt, of white linen, fell over a black silk cravat, tied carelessly round his neck. From beneath his sky-blue velvet cap, with glazed leather peak, escaped several locks of chesnut hair. His brightly-polished boots replaced the heavy iron shoes of the previous evening, and displayed to advantage a well-formed foot, which looked all the smaller from appearing out of a loose pantaloon of olive velveteen. This costume was well calculated to set off the elegant form and carriage of Rodolph, which combined rare grace, with agility and power. The ogress was sunning herself at her door when Rodolph presented himself.

"Your servant, young man. You have come, no doubt, for your change of the twenty francs," she said, with a sort of respect, not thinking it exactly prudent to forget that the conqueror of the Chourineur had thrown a louis d'or on her counter on the previous evening. "There is seventeen francs ten sous coming to you; but that's not all. There was somebody here asking for you last night—a tall gentleman, well dressed, who had with him a young woman disguised as a man. They drank my best wine with the Chourineur."

"Ah! they drank with the Chourineur, did they? And what did they say to him?"

"When I say they drank with him, I am wrong, for they barely tasted the wine, and——"

"But what did they say to the Chourineur?"

"Oh! they talked about one thing and the other—of Bras Rouge, the rain, and fine weather."

"Do they know Bras Rouge?"

"Quite t'other! The Chourineur told them who he was, and that you——"

"Well, well, that is not what I want to know."

"You want your change."

"Yes, and I want to take Goualeuse to pass the day in the country."

"Oh! that's impossible, my boy."

"Why?"

"Oh, because she may never come back again. Her *togs* belong to me, not reckoning pretty nigh a hundred francs she owes me for *grub* and *bub*,

for the six weeks she has lodged with me; and if I didn't know her to be as honest as the day, I should never let her go beyond the corner of the street, at most."

"Goualeuse owes you a hundred francs?"

"Ninety-six francs ten sous; but what's that to you, my lad? Are you going to do the noble, and pay it for her?"

"Yes," said Rodolph, throwing five louis on the ogress's counter; "and now what's your price for the clothes she wears?"

The old woman, amazed, examined the louis one after the other, with an air of doubt and suspicion.

"What! are you afraid that I have given you bad money? Send and get change for one, and have done with it. I say, again, how much for the rags the poor girl is wearing?"

The ogress, divided between the desire to make a good harvest, her surprise to see a workman with so much money, the fear of being cheated, and the hope of gaining more, was silent for a moment, and then replied: "Oh, them clothes are well worth a hundred francs."

"What! such rags as those! Come now, I tell you what, you shall keep the change I left last night, and I'll give you another louis, and no more. If I give you all I have, I shall rob the poor, who have a right to my alms."

"Well then, my boy, I'll keep my things, and Goualeuse shall stay where she is. I have a right to put my own price on my things, I suppose?"

"May Lucifer some day roast you as you deserve! Here, take the money; go and look for Goualeuse."

The ogress pocketed the gold, imagining that the workman had committed a robbery, or received a bequest, and then said, with a hideous leer: "Upon my honour! why not go up-stairs, and find Goualeuse yourself; she'll be very glad to see you, for, on the word of Mother Ponisse, she was very much taken with you last night!"

"No, no; you fetch her, and tell her I will take her into the country; that's all I want you to say; not a word about my having paid you her debt."

"Why not?"

"What is that to you?"

"To be sure, it's no matter to me; I would rather that she should still fancy herself in my power ——"

"Will you be silent, and do as I bid you?"

"Oh! how fierce you look! I pity anybody who has a wrangle with you. Well, I'm going;" and the ogress went up-stairs.

After a few minutes she came down again.

"Goualeuse would not believe me, and turned as red as a poppy when she found you were here; but when I told her that I would give her leave to spend the day in the country, I really thought she would have gone crazy—for the first time in her life she was ready to throw her arms about my neck."

"Ah, no doubt—for joy at leaving you."

Fleur-de-Marie entered at this moment, dressed as on the previous evening, with her gown of brown stuff, her little orange shawl tied behind her, and her check handkerchief over her head, leaving only two thick bands of light hair visible. She blushed when she saw Rodolph, and looked down with an air of confusion.

"Would you like to pass the day in the country with me, my child?" said Rodolph.

"Very much indeed, Mr. Rodolph," said Goualeuse, "if madame will permit me."

"Yes, yes, you may go, my little darling, because you're a good wench. Come, kiss me before you go."

And the old beldam offered her bloated face to Fleur-de-Marie. The poor unfortunate, overcoming her disgust, bent her forehead to the ogress, but Rodolph giving a sudden push with his elbow, shoved the old woman back on her seat, took the arm of Fleur-de-Marie, and left the *tapis-franc*, amidst the loud maledictions of Mother Ponisse.

"Take care, Mr. Rodolph," said Goualeuse; "the ogress is very spiteful, and will, perhaps, throw something at you."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, my girl. But what ails you? you seem embarrassed, sad. Do you regret having come out with me?"

"Oh, dear, no, quite the contrary; but—but—you give me your arm!"

"Well, what then?"

"You are a workman, and some one may tell your master that they saw you with me, and you might get into trouble through it; masters do not like their workmen to be unsteady." And Goualeuse gently disengaged her arm from that of Rodolph, adding: "Go on alone; I will follow you to the barrier; and once in the fields, I can rejoin you."

"Oh, don't be uneasy," said Rodolph, touched by the poor girl's delicate consideration, and again taking her arm; "my master does not live in this quarter, and, moreover, we shall find a coach on the Quai aux Fleurs."

"As you please, Mr. Rodolph; I only spoke that you might not get into trouble."

"I am sure of that, and thank you very much. But tell me frankly, do you care what part of the country we go to?"

"Not at all, Mr. Rodolph, so that it be the country. It is so fine, and so nice to breathe the beautiful air! Do you know, that for these six weeks I have not been further than the flower-market? And now, if the ogress allows me to leave the City, she must have great confidence in me."

"And when you went to the market, was it to buy flowers?"

"Oh, no, I had no money; I only went to look at them, and breathe their delicious odour. During the half-hour the ogress allowed me to pass on the quay on market-days, I felt so happy, that I forgot everything else."

"And on returning to the ogress, and those filthy streets?"

"Oh, then I became more sad than when I set out; and I had to suppress my tears, that I might not be beaten. Then at the market, what made me so envious—oh! so envious—was to see neat, clean, little workwomen, tripping gaily away, each with a beautiful pot of flowers in her hand."

"I am sure, that if you had had but a few flowers in your own window, you would have found them company for you."

"Oh! that I should, Mr. Rodolph. Imagine to yourself, the ogress, on her birth-day, knowing my taste, gave me a little rose-tree. If you only knew how happy it made me—I was never tired of looking at my rose-tree! I counted its leaves, its flowers; but the air of the City is bad, and it began to wither in two days. Then—but you'll laugh at me, Mr. Rodolph."

"No, no; go on."

FLEUR-DE-MARIE.

"Well, then, I asked the ogress to let me go out, and take my rose-tree for a walk, as I would have taken a child out. Yes, I carried it to the Quai, fancying that to be with other flowers, in the fresh and balmy air, would do it good. I dipped its poor, fading leaves in the clear waters of the fountain, and then, to dry it, I placed it for a full quarter of an hour in the sun. Dear little rose-tree! it never saw the sun in the City, any more than I did, for in our street it never descends lower than the roof. At last I went back again, and I assure you, Mr. Rodolph, that, thanks to these walks, my rose-tree lived ten days longer than it otherwise would."

"No doubt of it. But when it died, it must have been a severe loss to you."

"I cried heartily, for it grieved me very, very much; and you see, Mr. Rodolph—for you know one loves flowers, although one hasn't any of one's own—you see, I felt very grateful to my poor rose-tree, for blooming so kindly for me, although I was ——"

Goualeuse hung down her head, and blushed deeply.

"Unhappy child! with this feeling of your wretched position, you must often ——"

"Have wished to end it, you mean, Mr. Rodolph?" said Goualeuse, interrupting her companion. "Oh, yes, often. More than once I have looked over the parapet at the Seine; but then I turned to the flowers, and the bright sun, and I said: 'The river will be always there; I am but sixteen and a half—who knows?'"

"When you said *who knows*, you felt hope?"

"Yes."

"And what did you hope?"

"To find some kind person who would procure me work, so that I might be enabled to leave the ogress; and this hope consoled me. Then I said to myself: 'I am very miserable, but I have never injured any body; if I had any one to advise me, I should not be as I am.' This lightened my sorrow a little, though it had greatly increased at the loss of my rose-tree," added Goualeuse, with a sigh.

"Always so much sadness ——"

"Do! but see here it is."

And La Goualeuse took from her pocket a little bundle of wood, carefully sat up, and tied with a rose-coloured ribbon.

"You have preserved it?"

"Oh, yes; it is all I possess in the world."

"What, have you nothing of your own?"

"Nothing."

"But this coral necklace?"

"It belongs to the ogress."

"And you have not a piece of riband, a cap, or a handkerchief?"

"No, nothing—nothing but the dead branches of my poor rose-tree; that is why I love it so."

Rodolph and Goualeuse had reached the Quai aux Fleurs, where a coach was waiting, into which Rodolph handed Goualeuse. He got in himself, saying to the coachman: "To Saint Denis; I will then tell you which road to take."

The coach went on. The sun was bright, and the sky without a cloud, whilst the air, fresh and bracing, circulated freely through the open windows.

"See! here is a woman's cloak!" said Goualeuse, on remarking that she had seated herself on the garment without noticing it at the time.

"Yes, it is for you, my child; I brought it with me for fear you should be cold."

Little accustomed to such attention, the poor girl looked upon Rodolph with surprise.

"Ah, Mr. Rodolph, how kind you are! it makes me quite ashamed ——"

"Because I am kind?"

"No; but you do not speak as you did yesterday; you appear quite another person."

"Tell me then, Fleur-de-Marie, which do you prefer me to be—the Rodolph of yesterday, or the Rodolph of to-day?"

"I like you much better as you are now; and yet yesterday I seemed to be more your equal." Then, as if correcting herself, and fearing to have displeased Rodolph, she said: "When I say your equal, Mr. Rodolph, I do not mean that I ever can be that."

"There is one thing in you which astonishes me very much, Fleur-de-Marie."

"What is that, Mr. Rodolph?"

"You seem to have forgotten that the Chouette said to you yesterday, that she knew the persons who had brought you up."

"Oh! I have not forgotten that; I thought of it all night, and I cried bitterly; but I am sure it is not true; the one-eyed woman only invented this tale to make me unhappy."

"But possibly the Chouette may know more than you think. If it were so, should you not be delighted to be restored to your parents?"

"Alas! Mr. Rodolph, if my parents never loved me, what should I gain by being restored to them?—They would only see me and—— But if they did ever love me, what shame I should bring on them, perhaps I should kill them!"

"If your parents ever loved you, Fleur-de-Marie, they will pity, pardon, and still love you. If they have deserted you, then, when they see the frightful state to which their conduct has brought you, *their* shame and remorse will avenge you."

"What is the good of vengeance?"

"You are right; let us talk of it no more."

At this moment the carriage arrived near to Saint Ouen, at the point where the way branches off to Saint Denis and La Revolte. Notwithstanding the monotony of the journey, Fleur-de-Marie was so delighted at seeing the *fields*, as she called them, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollection of the Chouette had awakened in her, her lovely countenance grew radiant with delight. She looked out of the window, clasping her hands, and crying: "Mr. Rodolph, how happy I am! The grass! the fields! Will you let me get out?—it is so fine! I should so like a run in the meadows."

"Let us run then, my child. Stop, coachman."

"What! will you run too, Mr. Rodolph?"

"Why not? I am making holiday."

"Oh! what pleasure, Mr. Rodolph!"

And Goualeuse and her companion, taking each other's hand, run as fast as they could over a large meadow that had just been mowed. To describe the leaps and exclamations of childish joy, the intense delight of Fleur-de-Marie, would be impossible. Poor thing! so long a prisoner, she breathed the free air with unbounded pleasure. She ran, returned, stopped, and then raced off again with renewed transports. At the sight of the daisies and buttercups, Goualeuse could not refrain from fresh exclamations of joy—she did not leave one flower that was large enough to gather. After having run about in this way, she became fatigued, for she had lost the habit of exercise, and stopped to take breath, sitting

down on the trunk of a fallen tree, which was lying at the edge of a deep ditch.

The fair and transparent complexion of Fleur-de-Marie, generally rather pale, was now heightened by the brightest colour. Her large blue eyes sparkled with a soft brilliancy, her vermilion lips, partly opened to recover her breath, disclosed two rows of liquid pearls; her bosom throbbed under her worn-out little orange shawl, and she placed one of her hands upon her heart, as if to restrain its quickened pulsation, whilst with the other hand she proffered to Rodolph the bouquet of wild flowers which she had just gathered. Nothing could be more charming than the combination of innocence and pure joy which beamed on her expressive countenance. As soon as Fleur-de-Marie could speak, she said to Rodolph, with an accent of supreme happiness, almost amounting to piety: "How good is the great God to give us so fine a day!"

Tears sprang to the eyes of Rodolph, when he heard this poor, forsaken, despised creature utter this cry of happiness and gratitude to the Creator, because she enjoyed a ray of sunshine and the sight of a green field.

Rodolph was aroused from his reverie by an unexpected incident.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

We have said, Goualeuse was sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, at the edge of a deep ditch. Suddenly a man, springing from the bottom of this excavation, shook aside the rubbish under which he had concealed himself, and burst into a loud fit of laughter. Goualeuse turned round, with a cry of alarm. It was the Chourineur.

"Don't be frightened, my girl," said the Chourineur, when he saw her alarm, and that she had sought refuge with her companion. "Ah! Master Rodolph, here's a curious meeting, which I am sure neither you nor I expected." Then he added, in a serious tone: "Listen, master. People may say what they please, but there is something in the air—above there, over our heads, very wonderful, which seems to say to a fellow: 'Go where I send you.' See how you two have been sent here! It is devilish wonderful!"

"What are you doing there?" said Rodolph, greatly surprised.

"I was on the look-out in a matter that concerns you, master; but, thunder and lightning! what a good joke that you should come at this particular moment, into the very neighbourhood of my country-house! There's something in all this—decidedly there is something in it."

"But, once more, what are you doing there?"

"You shall know directly; only just give me time to take a look round from your travelling observatory yonder."

And the Chourineur then ran towards the coach, which was waiting at some distance off, mounted the box, looked this way and that way over the plain, with a keen and rapid glance, and presently rejoined Rodolph.

"Will you explain to me the meaning of all this?"

"Patience, patience, master; one word more. What's o'clock?"

"Half-past twelve," said Rodolph, looking at his watch.

"Good; then we have time. The Chouette will not be here for this half-hour."

"The Chouette!" exclaimed Rodolph and the young girl at the same moment.

"Yes, the Chouette; in two words, master, this is it. Yesterday, after you had left the *tapis-franc*, there came ——"

"A tall man with a woman in man's attire, who asked for me; I know. What then?"

"Then they paid for my drink, and wanted to *pump* me about you. I had nothing to tell them, seeing that you had communicated nothing to me, except the secret of that *hammering* which settled me, which I shall not easily forget. Between ourselves, we are friends for life and death, Master Rodolph, though the devil burn me if I know why; but I feel for you the attachment which a bull-dog feels for his master, since you told me that I had 'heart and honour;' but that's nothing, so there's an end of it. It's of no use trying to account for it; so it is, and so let it be, if it's any good to you."

"I thank you, my lad; but go on."

"The tall man and the little lady in man's clothes, seeing that they could get nothing out of me, left the ogress's, and so did I; they going towards the Palace of Justice, and I towards Notre Dame. On reaching the end of the street, I found it was raining pitchforks—a regular flood. Close by, there was an old house in ruins; I said to myself: 'If this weather is to last long, I can sleep as well here as in my own place.' So I tumbled myself into a sort of cave, where I was under cover; I took for my bed an old beam, and for my pillow a heap of lath and plaster, and behold you, I slept like a king."

"Well, well, what then?"

"I had taken something to drink with you, Master Rodolph; I had drank too with the tall gentleman and the little lady in man's clothes, so you may believe my head was none of the lightest; moreover, nothing lulls me into a good sound sleep like a pelting rain. I began then to doze, and should soon have begun to snore, but I was roused by a noise. I sat up and listened, and heard the Schoolmaster holding what may be termed a friendly conversation with somebody; I listened and listened—thunder! what did I recognise?—the voice of the tall man who was at the *tapis-franc* with the little woman dressed in man's clothes."

"They in conference with the Schoolmaster and the Chouette?" said Rodolph, stupefied with amazement.

"With the Schoolmaster and the Chouette; they agreed to meet again on the morrow."

"That's to-day," said Rodolph.

"At one o'clock."

"This very instant!"

"Where the road branches off to Saint-Denis and La Revolte."

"That is here!"

"Exactly so, Master Rodolph, just at this very spot."

"The Schoolmaster! oh! pray be on your guard, Mr. Rodolph," exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie.

"Calm yourself, my child, he will not come—it's only the Chouette."

"How could the man whom you saw at the *tapis-franc* with the disguised female come in contact with these two wretches?" said Rodolph.

"I can't tell. I think I only awoke at the end of the conversation, for the tall man spoke of getting back his pocket-book, which the Chouette was to bring with her in exchange for five hun-

dred francs. Most likely the Schoolmaster had begun by robbing him, and that subsequently they begun to parley, and to come to friendly terms."

"It is strange."

"Mercy! I tremble on your account, Mr. Rodolph," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Master Rodolph is no chicken, my girl; but as you say, there may be something brewing against him, and so I am here."

"Go on, my boy."

"The tall man and the little woman have promised two thousand francs to the Schoolmaster, to do to you—I don't know what. The Chouette was to be here presently, to return the pocket-book, and to know what is required from them, which she is to communicate to the Schoolmaster, who will undertake it."

Fleur-de-Marie shuddered. Rodolph smiled disdainfully.

"Two thousand francs to do something to you, Master Rodolph; it put me in mind, that when I see an advertisement of a dog that has been lost (not that I mean to make a comparison), promising a hundred francs for his restoration, I say to myself: 'Animal, if you were lost, no one would give a hundred farthings to find you.' Two thousand francs to do something to you! Who are you, then?"

"I'll tell you by and by."

"Enough, master. When I heard this proposal, I said to myself: 'I must find out these two swells who want to set the Schoolmaster on the track of Mr. Rodolph; it may be serviceable. When they had gone away, I crept out of my hole, and followed them quietly. The tall man and the little woman got into a coach that was standing near Notre Dame, and I mounted behind, and we went on until we reached the Boulevard of the Observatory. It was as dark as pitch; I could distinguish nothing, so I notched a tree, that I might find out the place in the morning."

"That's good, my boy."

"This morning I went there again, and about ten paces from the tree, I found a narrow entrance, closed by a gate; and in the mud I saw little and large footsteps, and at the end of the entrance a small garden-gate, where the traces ended; so the nest of the tall man and the little woman must be there."

"Thanks, my brave fellow; you have done me good service, without knowing it."

"I beg your pardon, Master Rodolph, but I thought it might be so, and that's why I did it."

"I know it, my boy, and I wish I could recompense your service more properly than by thanks; but unfortunately, I am only a poor devil of a workman, although, as you say, two thousand francs are offered to do something against me. I will explain that to you——"

"Good, if agreeable to yourself, but not otherwise. You are threatened with something, and I am opposed to that; the rest is your own affair."

"I guess what they want. Listen to me. I have a secret for cutting fans in ivory, by means of machinery, but this secret does not belong to me alone. I am awaiting the arrival of my partner to go to work, and, no doubt, it is the model of the machine, which I have at home, that they are desirous of getting from me at any price, for a great deal of money is to be made by this discovery."

"The tall man and the little woman then, are——"

"The fan-makers with whom I have worked, and to whom I have refused my secret."

This explanation appeared satisfactory to the Chourineur, whose understanding was not of the highest order, and he replied: "Now I comprehend it all. Oh, the *vermin!* and they have not the courage to do their dirty work themselves! But to finish my story. I said to myself this morning: 'I know where the tall man and the Chouette are to meet; I will go and wait for them; I have good legs, and my employer will excuse me. I came here, saw the ditch, fetched an armful of litter from the dunghill yonder, hid myself here up to my nose, and waited for the Chouette. But, lo and behold! you bowled across the plain, and poor Goualeuse came and seated herself on the edge of my park; then, faith, I thought I'd have a bit of fun, and, jumping out of my lair, I called out like a man that had been scalded!"

"And what is your intention now?"

"To wait for the Chouette, who is sure to arrive first, and listen to the conversation between her and the tall man, because that may be of service to you. There is nothing in the field but this trunk of a tree, and from here you may see all over the plain; it is as if it was put here on purpose to sit down upon. The rendezvous of the Chouette is scarcely four paces off, at the turning of the road, and I'll bet they come and sit here when they arrive. If I cannot contrive to hear anything, then, as soon as they separate, I will follow the Chouette, who is sure to hang behind, and I'll pay her the old grudge I owe her for the Goualeuse's tooth. I'll twist her neck round until she tells me the name of the parents of the poor girl, for she says she knows them. What do you think of my idea, Master Rodolph?"

"It is very good, my lad; but there is one part which wants correcting."

"Oh, yes! Chourineur, do not get yourself into a dangerous quarrel on my account. If you beat the Chouette, the Schoolmaster——"

"Say no more, my girl. The Chouette shall not be let off this time. Blood and 'ounds! it is because the Schoolmaster will defend her, that I will double her dose."

"Listen, my boy; I have a better means for avenging the cruelties of the Chouette to Goualeuse, with which I will acquaint you. But, said Rodolph, moving a few paces from Goualeuse, and lowering his voice: "Will you render me a real service now?"

"Speak, Master Rodolph."

"The Chouette does not know you."

"I saw her yesterday for the first time at the *tapis-franc*."

"Now, this is what you must do. You must first hide yourself; but, when you see her come close to you, get out of the ditch——"

"And wring her neck?"

"No, defer that for the present. To-day, the principal thing is to prevent her from speaking to the tall man. Seeing some one with her, he will not approach; if he does, do not quit her for an instant. He cannot make his proposition before you."

"If the man objects to my movements, I know what to do; he is neither the Schoolmaster nor Master Rodolph. Then I will follow the Chouette like her shadow, and the man shall not say a word that I do not overhear. He will finish

by running off, and then I will have my little turn with the Chouette. I must have it; it will be my sweet drop."

"Not yet; the one-eyed woman does not know whether you are a thief or not."

"No, unless the Schoolmaster has spoken of me to her, and told her that I am not in that line of business."

"If he has said so, you must appear to have changed your principles."

"I?"

"Yes."

"Thousand thunders! Mr. Rodolph, what do you mean? Hum! hum! I don't half like it; it goes against the grain for me to come it as strong as that."

"You shall only do as you please; but you will not find that I propose any infamous plan to you. The tall man gone, you must endeavour to cajole the Chouette. She will be furious at missing a good haul through you; but you must try and smooth her down by telling her that you know of a capital bit of business to be done, and that you are waiting here for your *pal*, and that, if the Schoolmaster likes to join you, there is plenty of money to be made."

"Well, well."

"After waiting for her an hour or so, you may say to her: 'My comrade does not come—it is too bad;' and then you may make an appointment with the Chouette and the Schoolmaster for to-morrow, at an early hour. You understand?"

"I understand."

"And this evening, at ten o'clock, you will meet me at the corner of the Champs Elysées, and the Allée des Veuves, and I will tell you the rest."

"If this be a trap, look out!—the Schoolmaster is a villain. You have beaten him, and, no doubt, he would very readily kill you."

"Don't be alarmed."

"Thunder and lightning! this is a *rum go;* but do just as you please with me. I do not hesitate, for something tells me that there is a dose mixing for the Schoolmaster and the Chouette. Hark'ee one word more, if you please, Mr. Rodolph."

"Speak."

"I don't think you are the man to set a trap for the Schoolmaster, to get him *nippered*. He is an arrant scoundrel, and deserves a hundred deaths; but to have him arrested—I will not be a party to that."

"Nor will I, my boy; but I have an account to settle with him and the Chouette, because they plot with those who plot against me; and we two will baffle them completely, if you will assist me."

"Oh, well then, as the male is as bad as the female, I'll join you. But quick, quick!" cried the Chourineur, "I see yonder a white speck, and that speck must be the Chouette. Away with you, and let me get into the ditch."

"And this evening at ten o'clock ——"

"At the corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allée des Veuves—agreed."

Fleur-de-Marie, who had not heard the latter part of this conversation between the Chourineur and Rodolph, now re-entered the coach with her travelling companion.

CHAPTER X.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

After this conversation with the Chourineur, Rodolph remained for some moments abstracted and pensive; while Fleur-de-Marie, not daring to interrupt the silence of her companion, continued to gaze on him with saddened earnestness. At length Rodolph raised his head, and said to her with a smile: "What are you thinking of, my child? I fear our rencontre with the Chourineur has been disagreeable to you; and we were so happy before."

"No, indeed, Mr. Rodolph; on the contrary, because I think the Chourineur may be of service to you."

"Did not this man pass, amongst the frequenters of the *tapis-franc*, as possessing some good points among his many bad ones?"

"I do not know, Mr. Rodolph; till the occurrence of the scene of last evening, I had scarcely ever spoken to him, although I had frequently seen him, and always supposed him to be as bad as the rest."

"Well, well, let us think no more about that, my little Fleur-de-Marie. I should be sorry if I made you sad—I, who brought you out purposely that you might pass a happy day."

"Oh! I am very happy. It is so long since I have been out of Paris."

"Not since your grand jaunt with Rigolette."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Rodolph; that was in the spring, but though it is now autumn, I enjoy it quite as much. How beautifully the sun shines!—look at those little gold-coloured clouds yonder—there, I mean; and that hill, with its pretty white houses among the trees. How many green leaves there still are, though we are in the middle of the month of October. Do you not think it astonishing, Mr. Rodolph? In Paris the leaves wither so soon. And, look! look at that flock of pigeons! See, they are settling on the windmill. In the country, one is never tired of looking round—everything is so amusing."

"It is really a pleasure to observe how sensible you are to the beauties of nature, Fleur-de-Marie, even in these trifling particulars, which, in reality, constitute the charm of a landscape."

This truth was, indeed, beautifully exemplified in Rodolph's companion; for her countenance, while gazing upon the calm and smiling scene before her, beamed with an expression of the purest joy.

"See!" she exclaimed, after gazing intently upon the charming picture around her; "see, there are some men ploughing in that field, where the clear, white smoke rises so beautifully, mingling with the clouds themselves; and that cart, with those two fine grey horses! Oh! if I were a man, how I should like to be a farm-labourer! to be in the midst of the green fields, and see the vast and waving woods around me, and the clear blue sky above my head—on such a day as this, for instance, when one feels a saddened joy, and the music of those old and melancholy songs, like Geneviève of Brabant, steal upon the memory, and draw the tears from one's eyes. Do you know the song of Geneviève of Brabant, Mr. Rodolph?"

"No, my child; but if you will you shall sing it to me before the day is over."

At these words, which reminded her that, at the close of this short-lived day, the brightest of her existence, she must return to her former misery, and the horrors of a corrupt life, poor Goualeuse, unable to controul her emotion, hid her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

RODOLPH.

"What ails you, Fleur-de-Marie? Why are you grieved?" asked Rodolph, with painful surprise.

"Nothing—nothing, Mr. Rodolph;" and, drying her eyes, and trying to smile, she added: "Forgive me for being so sad, and pray don't notice it. I assure you I have no cause for grief—it was a fancy, and now I will be quite gay."

"But you were so joyous a short time ago."

"Yes, and that made me weep," naïvely answered Fleur-de-Marie, turning towards Rodolph her large blue eyes filled with tears.

The words and looks of the poor girl spoke with touching truth to Rodolph, as to the cause of her distress, and, wishing to dissipate it, he said smilingly: "I'll wager you are thinking of your poor rose-tree, and are crying because you could not bring it out walking with you, as you used to do."

La Goualeuse fell into this good-natured pretext for regaining her cheerfulness. The clouds of sadness left her fair young face, and once again she appeared absorbed in the pleasure of the moment, without giving herself a thought of the future. The vehicle had by this time arrived near St. Denis, and the tall spires of the cathedral were visible.

"Oh, what a fine steeple!" exclaimed La Goualeuse.

"It is the steeple of the splendid church of Saint Denis: would you like to see it? We will top the coach."

La Goualeuse cast down her eyes, and said, in a low, tremulous tone: "From the hour I went to live with the ogress, I have never once entered a church—I did not dare. In the prison, on the contrary, I used to delight to join in singing the mass; and then for the Fête-Dieu, I made such lovely bouquets for the altar!"

"But God is good and merciful; why then should we fear to pray to Him, or to enter His holy church?"

"Oh! no, no, Mr. Rodolph, "it would be an impiety. It is too much to have offended God in other ways."

After a moment's silence, Rodolph said to La Goualeuse: "Fleur-de-Marie, tell me, have you ever been in love?"

"Never, Mr. Rodolph."

"How is that?"

"You have seen the kind of persons who frequent the *tapis-franc*. And then, to love, one must be good and virtuous ——"

"Why so?"

"Oh! because to love, one must be devoted—But, pray, Mr. Rodolph, let us talk of something else."

"Willingly, Fleur-de-Marie: let us change the conversation. But why do you look so beseechingly at me? Those charming blue eyes are still filled with tears. Have I done anything to vex you?"

"Oh, quite on the contrary; 'tis the excess of your goodness that makes me weep; and then you do not talk coarsely to me; indeed, one would think that you had brought me out solely for my individual pleasure and enjoyment, without thinking of yourself. Not content with your generous defence of me yesterday, you have to-day procured for me happiness such as I never enjoyed before."

"Then, are you indeed happy?"

"It will be long ere I forget the happiness of to-day."

"Real happiness falls to the lot of but few," said Rodolph, sighing.

"Alas! it is very rare."

"For my own part, to make up for a want of it, I often amuse myself with dreams of what I would have if I could, saying to myself: 'This is how and where I should like to live—this is the sort of fortune I should like to enjoy.' And you, Fleur-de-Marie, have you never amused yourself with building 'castles in the air?'"

"Yes, when I was in prison, before I went to live with the ogress, I used to do nothing all day but dream of these and sing; but I seldom do so now. And you, Mr. Rodolph, what are the objects of your ambition?"

"Oh, I should like to be rich, with plenty of servants and carriages; to possess a splendid hotel; mix in the first circles of fashion, and to go to the theatres and opera whenever I chose. And you, Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Oh! I should not be so difficult to please; all I should desire is, sufficient money to pay the ogress, and to keep me till I could obtain employment; then a pretty, clean room, from the window of which I could see the trees while I sat at my work."

"Plenty of flowers in your casement ——"

"Oh, certainly! And, if possible, to live in the country always. And that, I think, is all I should wish for."

"A little room, and work enough to support you—those are necessaries; but, when one is merely wishing, a few superfluities may be permitted. Should you not like carriages, diamonds, and rich clothes?"

"I should not care about them. My liberty, a country life, and the certainty of my not dying in a hospital, is all I wish for. Oh! above all, that I should not die there! Oh, Mr. Rodolph, that dread often comes across me, and makes me very sad—it is terrible!"

"Alas! we poor folks ——"

"I do not dread the misery of dying there, but it is the thoughts of what becomes of our bodies afterwards."

"Why should that shock you so much?"

"Have you never been told what they do with such as die in those places, Mr. Rodolph?"

"No."

"A poor young girl whom I had known in prison, afterwards died in a hospital, and they gave her body to the surgeons," murmured the shuddering Fleur-de-Marie.

"Ah! that is indeed horrible. But come, my poor child, you must not entertain these wretched thoughts."

"Yes, it surprises you, Mr. Rodolph, that I am concerned as to what becomes of my body when I am dead. Alas, my God! it is the only sense of shame that remains to me in my now wretched position!"

The mournful and bitter tone in which these words were uttered, struck Rodolph with painful astonishment. Poor Goualeuse, observing the deep dejection of her companion, said timidly: "Forgive me, Mr. Rodolph, I know I ought not to express such ideas to you, who so kindly brought me out to amuse me and give me pleasure; in return for which I only keep talking to you about sad things—all the dull and gloomy things I can think of! I cannot account for this, when all around me smiles and looks so gay! and, though I feel happier to-day than I ever did before, tears will come to my eyes. You are not angry with me, are you, my dear Mr. Rodolph?

But, see! this sadness will go away as suddenly as it came. There now, it is all gone. I will be reasonable, and think no more of it. Look, Mr. Rodolph, look at my eyes now."

And Fleur-de-Marie, after repeatedly closing her eyes to get rid of the rebellious tears that would gather there, opened them full upon Rodolph, with a look of the most charming sweetness.

"Fleur-de-Marie, I beg you to put no constraint upon yourself: be gay, if you wish it—be sad, if you feel inclined to sadness. I also sometimes have my dark hours; and I should be very sorry to feign the joy I do not feel."

"And are you sometimes sad, Mr. Rodolph?"

"Yes, my child. Alas! the prospect before me is but little brighter than your own. I have neither father nor mother; what would become of me if I were to fall ill and be unable to earn my daily bread, for I live but from day to day?"

"Oh, but that is wrong—very wrong indeed, Mr. Rodolph," said La Goualeuse, in a tone of such deep and grave remonstrance as made him smile. "You should always lay by something. All my troubles and misfortunes have happened because I was not more careful to save my money. If once a person can get a hundred francs beforehand, he need never fear falling into the power of any one; and it is embarrassment that often makes us do wrong."

"All that is very true and very sensible, my good little housewife; but a hundred francs!—that is a large sum—how could a man like myself ever amass a hundred francs?"

"Why, Mr. Rodolph, it is very simple, if you will but consider a little. Let us see, I think you said you could earn five francs a-day?"

"Yes, when I work."

"Ah! but you should always work. What have you to complain of? Yours is such a pretty trade—a fan-painter! It ought to be quite a pleasure to you to work. You are, really, quite unreasonable, Mr. Rodolph," said Goualeuse, in a sweet, yet severe tone. "Why, a workman may live well upon three francs a-day; and there remain forty sous: at the end of a month, if you manage prudently, you will have saved sixty francs. Think of that! There's a sum!—sixty francs in one month!"

"Yes, but then it is so pleasant to be idle sometimes."

"Once more, Mr. Rodolph, I must tell you that you talk like a child."

"Well then, I will be reasonable, my little sage, and listen to all your advice. Your idea of saving is a remarkably good one: I never thought of it before, and I promise you that I will save forty sous a-day."

"Really!" exclaimed the poor girl, clapping her hands with joy. "Oh, how delighted I am to hear you say so! Then you will begin from to-day to lay by the forty sous, will you?"

"From this very day," said Rodolph, smiling in spite of himself.

"Are you quite, quite sure you will?"

"Yes, I promise you I will."

"You will see how proud and happy you will be with your first savings; and then that is not all —— Will you promise not to be angry?"

"Do I look unkind, Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Oh! no, indeed; but I don't know whether I ought ——"

"You ought to tell me what you please, Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well then, how is it that *you*, who are so superior to your condition, can frequent such low cabarets as that kept by the ogress."

"If I had not gone to the *tapis-franc*, I should not have had the pleasue of wandering in the fields with you to-day, Fleur-de-Marie."

"That is, indeed, true, Mr. Rodolph; but, still, it does not alter the case. Certainly, I am as happy as possible to-day, but I would cheerfully give up all thoughts of such happiness for the future, did I think it could in any way injure you."

"On the contrary, you have made this holiday useful to me, by the excellent advice you have been giving me."

"And you will follow it?"

"I will; and I pledge my word of honour to save henceforward at least forty sous a-day."

"At this moment, Rodolph called out to the coachman, who was passing the village of Sarcelles: "Take the first road to the right—cross Villiers to Bel—then turn to the left and keep straight on."

"Now that you are satisfied with me, said Rodolph, turning to his companion, let us return to our amusement of building castles in the air: that does not cost much money, and you will not reproach me for extravagance in doing this."

"Oh, certainly not! go on, and build as many as you please."

"No, Fleur-de-Marie, let us have yours first."

"Well, I wonder if you could guess my taste, Mr. Rodolph."

"Let us try. Suppose that this road—I say *this* road, because we happen to be upon it——"

"Just so; this road will do as well as any other."

"Well then, I will suppose that this road leads to a charming village, far removed from the high road ——"

"Oh, yes; that makes it so much more quiet!"

"It is built on the brow of a hill, facing the south, and half hidden by beautiful trees ——"

"And close by it a gentle stream."

"Just so!—a clear, and gentle-flowing river. At the extremity of this village stands a pretty farm, with a nice orchard on one side of the house, and on the other a garden filled with flowers."

"That farm shall be called my farm, and we will pretend we are going there now."

"Exactly."

"And where we can get delicious milk!"

"Milk, did you say? Excellent cream, and newly laid eggs."

"Where we could stay all our lives!"

"All our lives!"

"And then we should go and see the cows feed!"

"To be sure we should."

"And then go to the dairy?"

"Yes, go to the dairy!"

"And the pigeon-house?"

"Yes, to the pigeon-house!"

"Oh, how very delightful, only to *think* of such things!"

"But let me finish the description of the farm."

"Oh, yes! do, do!"

"Well, the ground-floor contains a large kitchen for the farm-servants, and a room for the manager of the farm."

"Let the house have green blinds; they are so cool, and look so pretty, Mr. Rodolph."

"Oh, yes—green blinds to the windows. I

am quite of your opinion; they do look pretty—nothing prettier than green blinds. Of course, the mistress of this farm is your aunt."

"Naturally; and she is such a kind, good woman."

"Excellent! and loves you like a mother."

"Dear, good aunt! Oh, how delightful to have some one to love us!"

"And you will love her very much, in return for her love to you!"

"Oh!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven with an expression of happiness impossible to describe, "I should love her with all my heart! and I should help her to work, to sew, to cook, to preserve fruit for the winter; in short, I would do anything she required of me, and she should never have to complain of my idleness, I promise you. Then in the morning——"

"Stay, stay, Fleur-de-Marie: how impatient you are! Let me finish my picture of the house."

"Ah, ha! Mr. Painter, you are in the habit of painting pretty landscapes on your fans, which makes you very apt at description," said Goualeuse, laughing heartily.

"Little chatterbox, be quiet, and let me finish my house."

"Very true; I do chatter, but then it is so amusing! Pray go on, Mr. Rodolph, and I will not speak again till you have finished your beautiful house."

"Your room is on the first-floor."

"My room! how delightful! Pray go on, Mr. Rodolph, and let me have a description of my room." And the enraptured girl opened her large blue eyes, lighted up with the most joyous expression, and pressed more closely to Rodolph, as if she expected he would place the picture before her.

"Your chamber has two windows looking out upon the flower-garden, and a small meadow, watered by the little river. On the opposite bank of the stream rises a gentle eminence, planted with fine old chesnut-trees, among which the village-church is just visible——"

"Oh, this is beautiful, this is very beautiful, Mr. Rodolph! It makes me wish to be there."

"Three or four fine cows are grazing in the meadow, which is only separated from the garden by a hedge of honeysuckle——"

"And from my windows I can see the cows?"

"Perfectly."

"One among them shall be my favourite, shall it not, Mr. Rodolph? and I will make it a handsome collar of bluebells, and use it to feed out of my hand!"

"To be sure you shall, and she will come at your call. She shall be young and milk-white, and we will give her the name of Musette. Do you like that?"

"Oh, what a pretty name! Poor Musette! I love you already."

"Now, to finish your apartment, Fleur-de-Marie. It is hung with pretty green chintz, with curtains to match. A large rose-tree, entwined with honeysuckles, overhangs your window, so that you have only to put out your hand to gather a charming bouquet for the pretty vase which stands close by."

"Ah, Mr. Rodolph, what a good painter you are!"

"Now this is the way you will pass your day——"

"Yes, yes, tell me that!"

"Early in the morning, your good aunt wakes you with a tender kiss; she brings with her a bowl of new milk, just warm, which she prays you to drink, as she fancies you are delicate about the lungs, poor child! You will do as she wishes you; then you will rise, and take a walk round the farm; pay a visit to Musette, the poultry, your pets the pigeons, and the flowers in the garden, till nine o'clock, when your writing-master arrives——"

"My writing-master?"

"Why, you know you must learn such necessary things as reading, writing, and accounts, to be able to assist your aunt to keep her books relative to the produce of the farm."

"That is true! If I did not learn to write well, I could not assist my aunt," cried the poor girl, with seriousness; so thoroughly absorbed was she in the picture of this peaceful life, as to believe for the moment in its reality.

"After your lesson, you will occupy yourself in household matters, or embroider some pretty little article of dress for yourself; then you will practise your writing for an hour or two, and, when that is done, join your aunt in her round of visits to the different operations of the farm: in the summer, to see how the mowers get on in the hayfield; in harvest-time, to observe the reapers, and afterwards to enjoy the delight with which the gleaners pick up the scattered ears of grain: by this time you will have almost tired yourself, and gathering a handful of wild herbs and flowers, carefully selected by you as the known favourites of your dear Musette, you turn your steps homewards——"

"For we shall come home by the meadow, shall we not, Mr. Rodolph?" inquired Fleur-de-Marie, with all the earnestness belonging to the anticipation of actual enjoyment.

"Yes, and across the little bridge over the river separating the farm-land from the meadow. By the time you reach home, it is seven o'clock; and, as the evenings begin to be a little chill, a bright, cheerful fire is blazing in the farm kitchen: you go to it for a few minutes, to warm yourself, and to speak a few words to the honest labourers, who are enjoying a hearty meal after the day's toil is over. Then you sit down to dinner with your aunt; sometimes the clergyman, a friend of the family, or a neighbouring farmer, is invited to share the meal. After dinner you read or work, while your aunt and her guests have a friendly game at cards. At ten o'clock, your aunt dismisses you, with a kiss and a blessing, to your chamber, where you will offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Great Author of all your happiness; then sleep soundly till morning, when the same routine begins again."

"Oh! Mr. Rodolph, one might lead such a life as that for a hundred years, and never know a moment's weariness."

"But that is not all. There are Sundays and holidays to be thought of."

"Yes; and how shall we pass those, Mr. Rodolph?"

"Why, you would put on your holiday dress, with one of those prtetty little caps *à la paysanne*, which all admit become you so well, and accompany your aunt in her large old-fashioned chaise, driven by James the farm-servant, to hear mass in the village-church; after which, during summer, your kind relative would take you to the different fêtes given in the adjoining parishes. You, so gentle, modest, and good-looking, so

tenderly beloved by your aunt, and so well spoken of by the clergyman, for all the virtues and qualifications which make a good housewife, will have no scarcity of offers for your hand in the dance—indeed, all the principal young farmers will be anxious to secure you as a partner, by way of opening an acquaintance which shall last for life. By degrees you begin to remark one more than the others; you perceive his deep desire to attract your sole attention, and so ——" And here Rodolph, struck by the continued silence of La Goualeuse, looked up at her. Alas! the poor girl was endeavouring, though fruitlessly, to choke the deep sobs which almost suffocated her. Beguiled for a brief period, by the words of Rodolph, the bright future presented to her mental vision had effaced the horrible present; but too quickly did the hideous picture return, and sweep away for ever the dear delight of believing so sweet, so calm an existence, could ever be hers.

"Fleur-de-Marie," asked Rodolph, in a kind and affectionate tone, "why is this? why these tears?"

"Ah! Mr. Rodolph, you have unintentionally grieved me very much. Foolish girl that I was, I had listened to you till I quite fancied this paradise were a true picture."

"And so it is, my poor child! This paradise, as you call it, is no fiction."

"Stop, coachman!"

"Now look! see! observe where we are!"

As the carriage stopped, La Goualeuse mechanically raised her head—they were on the summit of a little hill: what was her surprise at the scene which met her gaze! The pretty village, built facing the south—the farm, the meadow, the beautiful cows, the little winding river, the chesnut grove, the church in the distance!—the whole picture, so vividly painted, was before her eyes. Nothing was wanting—even the milk-white heifer, Musette, her future pet, was peacefully grazing as she had been described. The rich colouring of an October sun gilded the charming landscape, while the variegated tint of the chesnut-leaves, slightly tinged by the autumnal breezes, stood out in bold relief against the clear blue of the surrounding sky.

"Well, Fleur-de-Marie, what do you say? am I a good painter or not?"

La Goualeuse looked at him with a surprise in which a degree of uneasiness was mingled; for all she saw and heard appeared to her like a dream.

"Mr. Rodolph," she at length exclaimed, with a bewildered air, "how can this be? Indeed, indeed, I feel afraid to look at it—it is so like what you have been telling me. Is it a dream, and will it pass away? Tell me, oh! tell me ——"

"Calm yourself, my dear child! Nothing is more simple or true than what you behold here. The good woman who owns this farm was my nurse, and brought me up here: intending to give myself a treat, I sent to her early this morning, to say I was coming to see her. You see I painted from nature."

"Ah! true, Mr. Rodolph," sighed La Goualeuse.

The farm to which Rodolph had conducted Fleur-de-Marie was situated at the outer extremity of the village of Bouqueval—a small, solitary, and almost unknown hamlet, surrounded by its own lands, and about two leagues' distance from Ecouen. The vehicle, following the directions of Rodolph, rapidly descended the hill, and entered a long avenue, bordered with apple and cherry-trees, while the wheels rolled noiselessly over the turf, covered with short fine grass, with which the unfrequented road was overgrown.

Fleur-de-Marie, whose utmost efforts were unavailing to shake off the painful sensations she experienced, remained so silent and mournful, that Rodolph reproached himself with having, by his well-intentioned surprise, been the cause of it. In a few minutes more, the carriage, passing by the large entrance to the farm, turned into a thick avenue of elm-trees, and stopped before a little rustic porch, half hidden by the luxuriant branches of the vine which clustered round it.

"Now, Fleur-de-Marie, here we are at last. Are you pleased with what you see?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I am, Mr. Rodolph. But I shall be ashamed to appear before the mistress of the farm, whom you have spoken of. Pray do not let her see me—I cannot venture to approach her."

"Why, my child?"

"After all, you are right, Mr. Rodolph; she does not know me, and will not think how unworthy I am." And poor Fleur-de-Marie tried to stifle the deep sigh that accompanied her words.

The arrival of Rodolph had doubtless been watched for. The driver had scarcely opened the coach-door when a prepossessing female, of middle age, dressed in the style of affluent farmers' wives in the neighbourhood of Paris, and whose countenance, though melancholy, had a gentle and benevolent expression, appeared in the porch, and with respectful eagerness advanced to meet Rodolph.

Poor Goualeuse coloured deeply, and her heart beat violently as she timidly descended from the vehicle.

"Good day, good day, my good Madame Georges," said Rodolph, advancing towards the individual so addressed; "you see I am punctual." Then turning to the coachman, and giving him some money, he said: "Here, my man, we will not detain you; you may return to Paris as soon as you please."

The coachman, a short, thick-set man, with his hat drawn over his eyes, and his countenance almost entirely concealed by the high collar of his driving-coat, pocketed the money without a word, remounted his seat, gave his horses the whip, and disappeared down the green avenue by which he had entered.

Fleur-de-Marie drew close to the side of Rodolph, and with an air of unfeigned alarm, almost amounting to distress, said, in a tone so low as not to be overheard by Madame Georges: "Mr. Rodolph! pray do not be angry with me, but why have you sent back the coach? Will it not return to fetch us away?"

"Oh, no; I have no further need of the coachman, and therefore dismissed him."

"But the ogress?"

"Ah! why do you mention her name?"

"Alas! I must return to her this evening; indeed, indeed, I must, or—or she will consider me a thief. The clothes I have on are hers, and I owe her ——"

"Be composed, my poor child; I should rather ask your forgiveness, not you mine."

"My forgiveness! for what, Mr. Rodolph?"

"For not having sooner told you that you owe nothing to the ogress; that it rests only with yourself to decide whether you will hence-

SIR WALTER MURPHY.

forward make this your home, and cast off the garments you now wear, for others that my kind friend Madame Georges will furnish you with. She has some that will fit you tolerably well, and can supply you with everything you require. You see, she is all impatience to take upon herself the character of *aunt*."

Poor Fleur-de-Marie seemed wholly unable to account for all this, and gazed with wondering and perplexed looks from one to the other, as though unable to credit what she saw and heard.

"*What!*" she cried at length, in a voice broken by strong emotion, "what! not go back to Paris? May I remain here? Will this lady permit me to stay with her? Oh! it cannot be possible! the castle you was just now building in the air ——"

"Was this farm. Behold the picture realised!"

"No, no, no; that would be too much happiness—too much good fortune!"

"Nay, Fleur-de-Marie, we cannot have too much happiness."

"Ah, Mr. Rodolph, for pity's sake, do not deceive me; you cannot imagine the misery I should feel were you to tell me all this was but a jest."

"My child, listen to me," said Rodolph, with a tone and manner which, although still affectionate, was mingled with a dignified accent and manner Fleur-de-Marie had not previously remarked in him. "I repeat that, if you please, you may from this very hour lead here, with Madame Georges, that peaceful life, the description of which but a short time since so much delighted you. Though the kind lady with whom you will reside is not your aunt, she will feel for you the most tender interest, and with the personages about the farm you will pass as being really and truly her niece, and this innocent deception will render your residence here the more agreeable and advantageous. Once more I repeat to you, Fleur-de-Marie, you may now at your own pleasure realise the dream of our journey. When you have assumed your village dress," said Rodolph, smilingly, "we will take you to see that milk-white heifer, Musette, your future favourite, and who only awaits the pretty collar you designed for her; then we will go and introduce ourselves to your pets, the pigeons, afterwards visit the dairy, and so go on till we have been all over the farm. I wish to keep my promise in every respect, I assure you."

Fleur-de-Marie pressed her hands together with earnest gratitude—surprise, joy, and the deepest thankfulness, mingled with respect, lit up her beautiful countenance, while, with eyes streaming with tears, she exclaimed: "Mr. Rodolph, you are, you must be, one of those beneficent angels sent by a merciful God to do good upon earth, and to rescue poor fallen creatures, like myself, from shame and misery."

"My poor girl," replied Rodolph, with a smile of deep sadness and ineffable kindness, "though still young, I am acquainted with sorrow. I lost a dear child, who, if living, would now be about your own age. Let that explain my deep sympathy with all who suffer, and for yourself particularly, Fleur-de-Marie, or, rather, *Marie* only. Now, go with Madame Georges, who will show you the pretty chamber, with its clustering roses and twining honeysuckles to form your morning bouquets. Yes, Marie, henceforward let that name, simple and sweet as yourself, be your only appellation. Before my departure we will have some talk together, and then I shall quit you, most happy in the knowledge of your full contentment."

Fleur-de-Marie, answering not a word, gracefully bent her knee, and, before Rodolph could prevent her, gently and respectfully raised his hand to her lips; then rising with an air of modest submission, accompanied Madame Georges, who surveyed her with a deep interest.

CHAPTER XI.

MURPHY AND RODOLPH.

Rodolph directed his steps towards the court-yard of the farm, where he found waiting for him the individual who, the preceding evening, disguised as a charcoal-man, had warned him of the approach of Tom and Sarah. Murphy—that was the name of this personage—was about fifty years of age. Some silvery stripes were amongst the two little tufts of light brown hair, which remained on his nearly bald head; his broad, open, and ruddy face was devoid of hair, except very short whiskers, of a reddish colour, only reaching as low as the tip of the ear, from which it diverged, and stretched itself in a gentle curve across his rubicund cheeks. Spite of his years and corpulence, Murphy was robust and active; his countenance, though somewhat phlegmatic, was expressive of benevolence and resolution; he wore a white neckerchief, a deep waistcoat, and a long black coat, with very wide skirts; his breeches, of an olive-green colour, corresponded in material with the gaiters which protected his sturdy legs, without reaching entirely to the knee, but allowing the strings belonging to his upper garment to display themselves in long unstudied bows; the dress and his manly appearance exactly accorded with the idea of what in England is styled a "gentleman farmer." But we must observe, that the personage we are describing, though an English squire, was no farmer. At the moment of Rodolph's entrance into the court-yard, Murphy was in the act of putting into the pocket of a travelling carriage, a pair of small pistols, which he had just been very carefully cleaning.

"What the devil do you want with those pistols?" inquired Rodolph.

"That is my business, my lord," replied Murphy, descending the carriage steps; "mind your own affairs, and I will attend to mine."

"At what hour have you ordered the horses?"

"According to your directions—at nightfall."

"You arrived here this morning?"

"At eight o'clock. Madame Georges has had ample time to get everything in readiness."

"You are in an ill-humour; have I done anything to displease you?"

"Can you not, my lord, accomplish the task you have imposed upon yourself, without incurring so much personal danger?"

"Surely, in order to lull suspicion in the minds of the persons I seek to understand and appreciate, I cannot do better than, for a time, to adopt their garb, their language and customs."

"But this did not prevent you, my lord, last night, when we went into that abominable street of the City, to unkennel Bras Rouge, in hopes of obtaining from him some particulars relative to that unhappy son of Madame Georges', from being angry, and ready to quarrel with me, because I wished to aid in your scuffle with the bandit you encountered in that cut-throat alley."

"I suppose then, Murphy, you either doubt my courage or the strength of my arm?"

"Unfortunately, you have given me too many causes to have no doubt about one or the other. Thank God, Flatman, the Bertrand of Germany, perfected you in the knowledge of fencing; Tom Cribb made you a finished boxer; Lacour, of Paris, accomplished you in single-stick, wrestling, and slang, so as to render you fully provided for your venturesome excursions. You are intrepid, with muscles of iron, and, though so alight in form, I should have no more chance with you than a dray-horse would against a racer, and no mistake."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"Why, I maintain, my lord, that it is not proper that you should throw yourself in the way of those blackguards. I do not say that because of the inconvenience it is to a gentleman of my acquaintance to blacken his face with charcoal, and make himself look like a devil. Notwithstanding my age, my corpulence, and my gravity, I would disguise myself as a rope-dancer, if, by so doing, I could serve you. But, as I have already said——"

"Oh! I know all that, my excellent Murphy; when once an idea gets into your thick skull, the very devil himself could no more drive it out of you than he could, by all his arts, remove the fidelity and devotion once implanted in your brave and valiant heart."

"You flatter me, my lord, and give me cause to suspect you are meditating some——"

"Out with it, Murphy."

"New folly, my lord."

"My poor Murphy, you have chosen a very unseasonable time for lecturing me."

"Why?"

"I am in one of my moments of pride and happiness. I am here!"

"Where you have done so much good. I know it. Your '*model farm*,' as you term it, founded by you to instruct, to encourage, and to reward the honest labourers, which has been of such immense service to this part of the country. Ordinary men think but of improving the breed and condition of their cattle; you occupy yourself in bettering the condition of your fellow-creatures. This is admirable! When you placed Madame Georges at the head of this establishment, you acted wisely and sensibly. Noble, courageous woman! An angel of virtue—so generous, firm, and upright! I am not easily moved, but the thought of her misfortunes have often brought tears to my eyes. But your new *protégée*, my lord; well, we will not say much of her."

"Why not, Murphy?"

"My lord, you will do as you please."

"I do what is just," said Rodolph, with an air of impatience.

"What you *think* is just."

"What is just before God and my own conscience," replied Rodolph, in a severe tone.

"Well, my lord, on this we cannot agree; let us speak no more about it."

"I command you to talk about it!" cried Rodolph, imperiously.

"I have never given your royal highness cause to bid me hold my tongue," said Murphy, proudly; "and I hope I shall not now be ordered to speak when I should be silent."

"Mr. Murphy," said Rodolph, with a tone of increased irritation.

"My lord!"

"You know, sir, how much I dislike concealment!"

"Your royal highness will excuse me, but it suits me to have certain concealments," said Murphy, bluntly.

"If I descend to familiarity with you, it is on condition, sir, that you, at least, act with frankness towards me."

It is impossible to describe the supreme *hauteur* which marked the countenance of Rodolph, as he pronounced these last words.

"I am fifty years of age, I am a gentleman, and your royal highness should not address me thus."

"Be silent!"

"My lord!"

"Silence, I say!"

"Your royal highness does wrong in forcing a man of honour and feeling to remind you of the services he has rendered you," said the squire, in a calm tone.

"Services! have I not repaid them in every way?"

It should be stated, that Rodolph did not attach to these cruel, bitter words, a humiliating sense, placing Murphy in the light of a mere mercenary; but such, unfortunately, was the squire's interpretation of them. Reddening with shame, he lifted his two clenched hands to his forehead with an expression of pain and indignation, and then, in a moment, as if by a sudden revulsion of feeling, casting his eyes on Rodolph, whose noble countenance was convulsed by the violence of extreme disdain, Murphy, in a faltering voice, and stifling a sigh of the tenderest commiseration, said: "My lord, be yourself; you are unreasonable."

These words increased Rodolph's irritation to the very highest pitch; his look had even a savage glare in it: his lips were blanched; and, advancing towards Murphy with a threatening gesture, he exclaimed: "Dare you?"

Murphy retreated, and said, in a quick tone, as if in spite of himself: "My lord, my lord, REMEMBER THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY!"

These words produced a magical effect on Rodolph. His countenance, contracted by anger, now expanded. He looked steadfastly at Murphy, bowed his head, and then, after a moment's silence, murmured, in faltering accents: "Ah! sir, you are now cruel indeed. I had thought that my repentance—my remorse—and yet it is you—you——"

Rodolph could not conclude, his voice was stifled; he threw himself on a stone bench, and buried his face in his hands. P 32

"My lord," said Murphy, in despair, "my good lord, forgive me! Forgive your old and faithful Murphy. It was not till driven to an extremity, and fearing, alas! not for myself, but for you, the consequences of your passion, that I said that. I said it in spite of myself, and with sorrow. My lord, I was wrong to be so sensitive. Ah! who can know your character, your feelings, if I do not—I, who have never quitted you from your infancy! Oh, for mercy, say that you forgive me for having called to your recollection that fatal day. Alas! what expiations have you not made——"

Rodolph raised his head; he was very pale, and said to his companion, in a gentle and saddened voice: "Enough, enough, my old friend; I thank you for having checked this fatal transport. I make no apologies to you for the harsh things I have said; you know, '*it is a long way from the heart to the lips*,' as good people at home say. I was wrong; let us say no more about it."

[Rodolph and Murphy.]

"Alas! now you will be sad and melancholy for a long time, as if I were not sufficiently unhappy!' I only wish to see you roused from your low spirits, and yet I add to them by my foolish susceptibility. Good Heaven! what is the use of honesty and grey heirs, if we cannot endure reproaches which we do not deserve?"

"Be it so, be it so; we were both in the wrong, my good old friend," said Rodolph, mildly; "let us forget it, and return to our former conversation. You fully approved of my establishment of this farm, and the deep interest I have taken in Madame Georges. You will allow, will you not, that she had merited it by her excellent qualities, her misfortunes, even if she did not belong to the family of Harville—a family to which my father had vowed eternal gratitude."

"I have always approved of the sentiments which you have entertained for Madame Georges, my lord."

"But you are astonished at my interest for this poor girl, are you not?"

"My lord, have mercy; I was wrong, I was wrong."

"No, I can imagine that appearances have deceived you; only, as you know my life—*all* my life, and as you aid me always with as much fidelity as courage, in my self-inflicted expiation, it is my duty, or, if you like the phrase better, my gratitude, to convince you that I am not acting from light motives."

"I am sure of that, my lord."

"You know my ideas on the subject of the good which a man ought to do who unites *knowledge*, *will*, and *power*. To succour unhappy but deserving fellow-creatures is *well;* to seek out those who uncomplainingly struggle against adversity with energy and honour, and to aid

them, sometimes without their knowledge—to prevent, in time, misery and temptation to crime, is *better;* to reinstate such perfectly in their own estimation—to lead back to honesty those who have preserved in poverty some generous and ennobling sentiments in the midst of the contempt that withers them, the misery that eats into them, the corruption that encircles them. Better still, I say, it is to do this, and for the sake of doing it, to brave, in person, this misery, this corruption, this contagion; to pursue, with unalterable hatred, with implacable vengeance, vice, infamy, and crime, whether grovelling in mud, or enthroned on velvet and gold, is *justice;* but to give aid inconsiderately to merited degradation, to lavish charity and commiseration, by bestowing help on unworthy objects, is infamous, impious, a sacrilege! it is to doubt the existence of the Almighty; and so he who thus acts should we made to believe."

"My lord, I did not mean to assert that you have bestowed your benefits unworthily."

"One word more, my old friend. You know that the child whose death I daily lament—that daughter whom I should have loved the more, as her unfeeling mother, Sarah, had shewn herself so totally indifferent about her—would now have been sixteen years old, like this unfortunate creature. You know, besides, that I cannot prevent the deep and painful sympathy I feel for young girls of that age."

"That is true, my lord; I ought so to have interpreted the interest you take in your *protégée*. Besides, to succour the unfortunate is to honour God."

"Yes, my friend, when the objects are deserving; and there is nothing more worthy of compassion and respect than a woman like Madame Georges, who, reared by a pious and good mother, in the close observance of all her duties, has never failed—never! and has borne herself nobly and bravely in the midst of the severest trials. But is it not also honouring God, to lift from the mire, one of those beings whom He has been pleased to endow so richly? Does not she deserve compassion and respect—yes, respect—who, unhappy girl! abandoned to her own instinct—who, tortured, imprisoned, debased, sullied, has yet preserved, in the depths of her young heart, those noble germs first implanted by the Almighty? If you had but witnessed how, at the first word of interest expressed to her—the first friendly and virtuous speech that had ever been addressed to her—the most charming instincts, the purest tastes, the most refined thoughts, the most poetic ideas, developed themselves abundantly in her ingenuous mind, even as, in the early spring, a thousand wild flowers lift up their heads at the first rays of the sun. In one hour's conversation with Fleur-de-Marie, I discovered in her treasures of goodness, worth, prudence—yes, prudence, my old Murphy. A smile came to my lips, and tears to my eyes, when, in her gentle and sensible gossip, she proved to me that I ought to save forty sous a-day, that I might be beyond want and evil temptations. Poor little thing! she said all this with an air so serious and persuasive; she experienced so much delight in giving me good advice, so sweet a joy in hearing me promise to follow it, that I was moved—yes, moved even to tears. But you—you too are affected, my old friend."

"Yes, my lord; that notion of making you lay by forty sous a-day, thinking you a workman, instead of urging you to extravagance towards herself—that does touch me."

"Hush! here come Madame Georges and Marie. Get everything ready for our departure; we must be at Paris early."

Thanks to the care of Madame Georges, Fleur-de-Marie was now scarcely recognisable. A pretty peasant's cap, and two thick bands of light brown hair, encircled her charming face. An ample kerchief of white muslin crossed her bosom, and half disappeared under the high fold of a small shot taffetas apron, the blue and red shades of which appeared to advantage over a dark carmelite gown, which seemed to have been made for her. The countenance of the young girl was calm and thoughtful. Certain joyous feelings produce in the mind an unspeakable sadness—a holy melancholy. Rodolph was not surprised at the gravity of Fleur-de-Marie, he had expected it. Had she been merry and talkative, he would have had a less elevated opinion of her. In the serious and resigned features of Madame Georges might be traced the indelible marks of long-suffering. She looked on Fleur-de-Marie with a tenderness and compassion almost maternal, so much grace and sweetness did this young girl exhibit.

"Here is *my child*, who has come to thank you for your goodness, Mr. Rodolph," said Madame Georges, presenting Goualeuse to Rodolph.

At the words *my child*, Goualeuse turned her large eyes towards her protectress, and regarded her for some moments with a look of unutterable gratitude.

"Thanks for Marie, my dear Madame Georges; she is worthy of this tender interest, and will always deserve it."

"Mr. Rodolph," said Goualeuse, with a trembling voice, "you understand, do you not, how it is that I cannot find anything to say to you?"

"Your emotion tells me all, my child——"

"Oh! she feels deeply the good that has so providentially come to her," said Madame Georges, with much feeling; "her first impulse on entering my room was to prostrate herself on her knees before my crucifix."

"Because now, thanks to you, Mr. Rodolph, I dare to pray," said La Goualeuse.

Murphy turned hastily away; his pretensions to firmness would not allow him to let any one witness to what extent he had been touched by the simple words of Goualeuse.

Rodolph said to her: "My child, I wish to converse with Madame Georges. My friend Murphy will conduct you over the farm, and introduce you to the acquaintance of your future *protégée*. We will rejoin you presently. Well, Murphy, Murphy, do you not hear me?"

The worthy gentleman turned his back, and pretended to blow his nose with a very formidable noise, then put his handkerchief in his pocket, pulled his hat over his eyes, and, turning half round, offered his arm to Marie. Murphy had managed so skilfully, that neither Rodolph nor Madame Georges could see his face. Taking the arm of the young girl, he walked away with her towards the farm-buildings, with such rapid strides, that, to keep up with him, Goualeuse was obliged to run, as in the days of her infancy she ran beside the Chouette.

"Well, Madame Georges, what do you think of Marie?" asked Rodolph.

"Mr. Rodolph, I have already told you: she had scarcely entered my room, when, seeing the crucifix, she prostrated herself before it. It is impossible for me to describe to you the spontaneous and naturally religious feeling that was

displayed in this movement. I saw in an instant that her soul was not degraded. Then, Mr. Rodolph, the expression of her gratitude to you had nothing exaggerated in it; and, though not emphatic, it is not the less sincere. In a word, I will show you how powerful is this religious instinct implanted in her. I said to her: "You must have been much astonished, and very happy, when Mr. Rodolph told you that you were to remain here for the future? It must have produced a deep effect upon you!' 'Oh! yes,' she replied; 'when Mr. Rodolph said that, I cannot describe what passed within me; but I felt that kind of pious joy which I have experienced on entering a church. When I could go there,' she added, 'for you know, Madame ——' Seeing her countenance covered with shame, I did not allow her to finish what she was going to say, but said to her: 'I know, my child, for I shall always call you my child, I know that you have suffered much; but God blesses those who love and fear Him, those who have been unfortunate, and those who repent."

"Then, my good Madame Georges, I am doubly happy at what I have done. This poor girl will interest you, her disposition is so good, her instincts so excellent."

"What still further affected me, Mr. Rodolph, is that she has not permitted a single question to escape her about you, although her curiosity must be so much excited. Struck with a reserve so full of delicacy, I wished to ascertain what she felt, and said to her: 'You must be very curious to know who your mysterious benefactor is?' '*Know him!*' she replied, with a charming simplicity: '*I know him as my benefactor.*'

"Then you will love her? Excellent woman! she will find a place in your heart?"

"Yes, I shall occupy myself with her as I should with *him*," said Madame Georges, in a voice broken with emotion.

Rodolph took her hand.

"Come, come, do not be again discouraged; if our search has been unsuccessful hitherto, yet one day, perhaps ——"

Madame Georges shook her head, and said, in bitter accents: "My poor son would be now twenty years old!"

"Say he *is* that age ——"

"God hear you, and grant it, Mr. Rodolph."

"He will grant it, I fully believe. Yesterday I went (but in vain) in search of a certain fellow called *Bras Rouge*, from whom I had believed I might, perhaps, have obtained some information about your son. Coming from the house of this Bras Rouge, after an affray in which I was engaged, I met with this unfortunate girl ——"

"Alas! but at least your kind endeavour in my behalf threw you in the way of succouring another unfortunate, Mr. Rodolph."

"You have received no news from Rochfort?"

"None," said Madame Georges, in a low voice, and shuddering.

"So much the better! I have now no doubt that the monster perished in the attempt to escape from the ——"

Rodolph hesitated to pronounce the terrible word.

"From the *hulks!* Oh, say it!—the *hulks!*" exclaimed the wretched woman with horror, and almost frantic as she spoke. "The father of my boy! Ah! if the unhappy child still lives—if, like me, he has not changed his name—oh, shame! shame! And yet it may be nothing; his father has, perhaps, carried out his horrible threat! What has he done with my boy? Why did he tear him from me?"

"That mystery I cannot penetrate," said Rodolph, with a pensive air. "What could be the motive of the wretch in carrying off your son fifteen years ago, and when he was trying to escape into a foreign land? A child of that age could only embarass his flight."

"Alas, Mr. Rodolph! when my *husband*" (the unhappy woman shuddered as she pronounced the word) "was arrested on the frontier, brought to Paris, and thrown into prison, where I was allowed to visit him, he said to me these horrible words: 'I took away your child because you loved him, and it will be a means of compelling you to send me money, which may or may not benefit him—that's my affair. Whether he lives or dies is of no importance; but if he lives, he will be in good hands: you shall drink as deep of the shame of the son as you have of the infamy of the father!' Alas! a month afterwards my husband was condemned to the galleys for life; since then all my entreaties, my prayers and letters, have been in vain. I have never been able to learn the fate of my child. Ah, Mr. Rodolph! my boy, where is he at this moment? These frightful words are continually sounding in my ears: 'You shall drink as deep of the shame of the son as you have of the infamy of the father!'"

"But that is most inexplicable atrocity: why should he corrupt the unhappy child? why carry him off?"

"I have told you, Mr. Rodolph—in order to force me to send him money: although he had nearly ruined me, yet I had still a few resources, but they at length were exhausted also. Notwithstanding his wickedness, I could not but believe that he would employ, at least, a portion of this money in the bringing up of this unhappy child."

"And your son had no sign, no mark, by which he could be recognized?"

"No other than that of which I have spoken to you, Mr. Rodolph—a small *Saint-Esprit*, sculptured in lapis lazuli, attached to his neck by a chain of silver: a sacred relic, blessed by a holy father."

"Come, come, courage; God is all-powerful."

"Providence placed me in your path, Mr. Rodolph."

"Too late, my good Madame Georges; too late. I might, perhaps, have spared you many years of sorrow."

"Ah, Mr. Rodolph, you have overwhelmed me with kindness!"

"How? I bought this farm. In the time of your prosperity you had the taste to superintend your own property; you have now consented to become my manager here, where—thanks to your care, intelligence, and activity—this establishment produces me ——"

"Produces you, my lord?" said Madame Georges, interrupting Rodolph: "why, all the returns are employed, not only in ameliorating the condition of the labourers, who look upon their occupation on this model farm as a great favour, but, moreover, to succour all the unfortunate in the district; through the mediation of our good Father Laporte ——"

"Ah, the dear man!" said Rodolph, wishing to evade the praise of Madame Georges: have you had the kindness to inform him of my arrival? I wish to recommend my *protégée*. He has received my letter?"

"Mr. Murphy gave it to him on his arrival this morning."

"In that letter I recounted to our good clergyman, in a few words, the history of this poor child. I was not certain that I should be able to come to-day myself; in that case, Murphy would have conducted Marie ——"

A labourer of the farm interrupted this conversation, which was held in the garden.

"Madame, the clergyman is waiting for you."

"Are the post-horses arrived, my lad?" inquired Rodolph.

"Yes, Mr. Rodolph; they are being put-to." And the man left the garden.

Madame Georges, the clergyman, and the inhabitants of the farm, knew the protector of Fleur-de-Marie only as Mr. Rodolph. Murphy's discretion was impenetrable; and although when in private he was very precise in '*my-lording*' Rodolph, yet before strangers he was very careful not to address him by any other appellative than that of *Mr. Rodolph*.

"I forgot to tell you, my dear Madame Georges," said Rodolph, as they returned to the house, "that Marie has, I fear, very weak lungs—privations and misery have tried her health. This morning early I was struck with the paleness of her countenance, although her cheeks were of a deep rose colour; her eyes, too, seem to me to have a brilliancy which betokens a feverish tendency. She will require great care."

"Rely on me, Mr. Rodolph; but, thank God! there is nothing serious to apprehend. At her age, in the country, with pure air, repose and happiness, she will quickly recover."

"I think so; but, nevertheless, I will not trust to your country doctors. I will desire Murphy to bring here my medical man—a negro—a very skilful person, who will point out to you the best regimen to follow. You must send me news of Marie very often. In a little time, when she shall be better, and more settled, we will talk as to her future life; perhaps it would be best that she always remained with you, if her conduct and temper are agreeable to you, and she is content."

"That would be my desire, Mr. Rodolph; she would supply the place of the child whose loss I daily and hourly bewail."

"Let us hope for you and for her."

At the moment when Rodolph and Madame Georges approached the farm, Murphy and Marie also came up. The worthy gentleman let go the arm of Goualeuse, and said to Rodolph in a whisper, and with an air of some confusion: "This little girl has bewitched me; I really do not know which interests me most, she or Madame Georges. I was a brute—a savage beast!"

"I knew that you would render justice to my *protégée*, old Murphy," said Rodolph, smiling, and shaking hands with the squire.

Madame Georges, leaning on the arm of Marie, entered with her into a small room on the ground floor, where Father Laporte was waiting. Murphy went to make preparations for their departure. Madame Georges, Marie, Rodolph, and the clergyman remained together.

Simple, but very comfortable, this small apartment was fitted up with green hangings, like the rest of the house, as had been faithfully described to Goualeuse by Rodolph. A thick carpet covered the floor, a good fire blazed in the grate, and two large nosegays, placed in two crystal vases, shed an agreeable balsamic odour through the room. From the windows, with their green blinds half opened, was to be seen the meadow, the little river, and, beyond it, the bank planted with chesnut-trees.

Father Laporte, who was seated near the fireplace, was upwards of eighty years old, and had, ever since the last days of the Revolution, done duty in this small parish. Nothing could be more venerable, or more gently imposing, than his aged, withered, and somewhat melancholy countenance, shaded by long white hair, which fell on the collar of his black cassock, patched in more places than one: the clergyman preferring, as they said, to clothe one or two poor children in good warm broad-cloth, than *faire le muguet*; that is, to wear his cassocks less than two or three years. The good clergyman was so old, so very old, that his hands trembled always; and when he occasionally lifted them up, when speaking, it might have been supposed that he was bestowing a benediction.

"Mr. Laporte," said Rodolph, respectfully, "Madame Georges has undertaken the charge of this young girl, for whom I also solicit your kindness."

"It is her right, sir, like all who come to us. The mercy of God is inexhaustible, my dear child; He has proved it in not abandoning you in most painful trials—I know all." And he took the hand of Marie in his own venerable and trembling palms. "The generous man who has rescued you has realised the words of Scripture: 'The Lord is near to all those who call upon Him: He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him; He will hear their cries, and He will save them.' Now deserve His bounty by your conduct, and you will always find one ready to encourage and sustain you in the good path on which you have entered. You will have in Madame Georges a daily example, in me a careful adviser. The Lord will finish His work."

"And I will pray to Him for those who have have had pity on me, and have led me to Him, father," said La Goualeuse, throwing herself on her knees before the priest. Her emotion overcame her, and she was almost stifled by her sobs. Madame Georges, Rodolph, and the clergyman, were all deeply affected.

"Rise, my dear child," said the clergyman, "you will soon merit absolution from those grave faults of which you have been the victim rather than the criminal; for in the words of the prophet again: 'The Lord raises up all those who are ready to fall, and elevates those who are oppressed.'"

Murphy, at this moment, opened the door of the room.

"Mr. Rodolph," he said, "the horses are ready."

"Adieu, my father! adieu, my good Madame Georges! I commend your child to your care—our child, I should say. Farewell, Marie; I will come and see you again very soon."

The venerable pastor, leaning on the arms of Madame Georges and La Goualeuse, who supported his tottering steps, left the room to witness the departure of Rodolph.

The last rays of the sun shed their bright light on this sad and interesting group:—An old priest, the symbol of charity, pardon, and eternal hope—a woman overwhelmed by every grief that can distress a wife and mother—a young girl, hardly out of her infancy, and but recently plunged into an abyss of vice, through poverty and the horrid tyranny of crime.

Rodolph got into the carriage, Murphy took his place by his side, and the horses set off at a gallop.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

The day after he had confided the Goualeuse to the care of Madame Georges, Rodolph, still attired as a workman, was, at noon precisely, at the door of a cabaret with the sign of the Panier-Fleuri, situate near the barrier of Bercy.

On the previous evening, at ten o'clock, the Chourineur was punctual to the appointment which he had made with Rodolph. The sequel of this narrative will inform our readers of the result of this meeting. It was noon, and the rain fell in torrents; the Seine, swollen by incessant falls of rain, had risen very high, and inundated a portion of the quay. Rodolph looked impatiently from time to time towards the barrier: at length he observed a man and woman, who were advancing in the distance, under the shelter of an umbrella, and whom he recognised as the Chouette and the Schoolmaster.

These two persons were completely metamorphosed: the ruffian had abandoned his sordid attire, and his air of brutal ferocity. He wore a long freck-coat of green cloth, and a round hat; whilst his neckerchief and shirt were of snowy whiteness. Saving the hideousness of his features and the fierce glare of his eyes, always restless and suspicious, this fellow, by his peaceable and steady gait, might have been taken for an honest citizen.

The one-eyed woman, also dressed in her best, wore a large imitation-cashmere shawl of fine wool, and carried in her hand a capacious basket.

The rain having ceased for a moment, Rodolph, overcoming a sensation of disgust, went to meet the frightful couple. For the slang of the *tapis-franc* the Schoolmaster now substituted a language almost polished, and which betokened a cultivated mind, in strange contrast with his sanguinary character and crimes. When Rodolph approached, the brigand made him a profound bow, and the Chouette curtsied respectfully.

"Sir, your humble servant," said the Schoolmaster. "I am delighted to pay my respects to you—delighted—or, rather, to renew our acquaintance; for the night before last you dealt me two blows of the fist which were enough to have felled a rhinoceros. But not a word of that now; it was a joke on your part, I am sure—a simple jest. Let us think no more about it, for serious business brings us now together. At eleven o'clock yesterday, I saw the Chourineur, at the *tapis-franc*, and appointed to meet him here this morning, in case he chose to co-operate with us; but it seems that he most decidedly refuses."

"You accept, then?"

"Your name, sir, if you will?"

"Rodolph."

"Mr. Rodolph, we will go into the Panier-Fleuri—neither myself nor Madame has breakfasted—and we will talk over our little affairs whilst we are taking a crust."

"Willingly."

"We can talk as we walk along. You and the Chourineur, without meaning any reproach, certainly owe some recompense to my woman and myself—you have caused us the loss of more than two thousand francs. La Chouette had an appointment near Saint-Ouen with the tall gentleman in mourning, who came to ask for you the other evening at the *tapis-franc*. He offered two thousand francs to do something to you. The Chourineur has explained all about that. But now I think of it, Finette," said the brigand, "go and select a room at the Panier-Fleuri, and order the breakfast—some cutlets, a bit of veal, a salad, and a couple of bottles of their best wine; we'll soon be there."

The Chouette, who had not taken her eye off Rodolph for an instant, went forward, after exchanging looks with the Schoolmaster, who then said: "As I observed, Mr. Rodolph, the Chourineur has edified me as to the proposition about the two thousand francs."

"What do you mean by *edified* you?"

"That's true—the language is a little too exalted for you. I would say, that the Chourineur nearly told me all that the tall gentleman in mourning, with his two thousand francs, wanted with you."

"Very well."

"Not so very well, young man; for the Chourineur, having yesterday morning met the Chouette, near Saint-Ouen, never left her an inch, from the moment when the tall gentleman in mourning came up, so that he could not venture to approach her. It is only right then, that you should put us in the way of regaining our two thousand francs."

"Nothing is more easy: but let us 'hark back.' I had proposed a glorious job to the Chourineur, which he at first accepted, but afterwards declined."

"He always has singular ideas."

"But whilst he refused he observed to me——"

"He caused you to observe ——"

"The devil! you ride the high horse with your grammar."

"As a schoolmaster, it is my business."

"He made me, then, observe, that if he would not go on the 'lay,' he did not wish to discourage others, and that you would probably shake hands with me upon it."

"And may I, without rudeness, ask why you appointed a meeting with the Chourineur at Saint-Ouen yesterday morning, which procured him the advantage of meeting the Chouette? He was too much puzzled at my question to give me a clear answer on that point."

Rodolph imperceptibly bit his lips, and replied, shrugging his shoulders: "I can easily suppose that; for I only told him a part of my plan, you see, not knowing if he had made up his mind about joining me."

"That was prudent."

"Doubly so, as I had two strings to my bow."

"You are a cautious man. You appointed to meet the Chourineur, then, at Saint-Ouen, for ——"

Rodolph, after a moment's hesitation, had the good fortune to hit upon a story which would account for the Chourineur's want of address, and replied: "This is it. The affair I propose is an excellent one, because the master of the house in question is in the country: all my fear was that he should return to Paris. To be sure upon that point, I went to Pierrefitte, where his country residence is situated, and there I learned that he would not be back again until the day after to-morrow."

"Very well, but I want an answer to my question: why did you meet the Chourineur at Saint-Ouen?"

"You are not over intelligent, allow me to say. How far is it from Pierrefitte to Saint-Ouen?"

"About a league."

"And from Saint-Ouen to Paris?"

"About the same distance."

"Well, if I had found nobody at Pierrefitte—that is, if the house had been deserted—I could have done good business there: not so good as in Paris, but still very passable. I went back to Saint-Ouen, to the Chourineur, who was waiting for me there. We should have then returned to Pierrefitte, by a cross-path with which I am familiar, and ——"

"I understand. If, on the contrary, the job was to be done at Paris ——"

"We should gain the barrier de l'Etoile by the road of the Revolte, and thence to the Allée des Veuves ——"

"Is but a step: this is simple enough. At Saint-Ouen you were well placed for either operation—that was clear. Now I can understand why the Chourineur was present at Saint-Ouen. We may conclude then, that the house in the Allée des Veuves will be uninhabited until the day after to-morrow?"

"Uninhabited, except by the porter."

"Exactly. And is it a profitable job?"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold in the proprietor's study."

"And you know all the ways?"

"As well as I know the way to my pocket."

"Silence—here we are—not a word before the vulgar. I do not know how you feel, but the morning air has given me an appetite."

The Chouette was waiting for them at the door of the cabaret.

"This way," she said, "this way. I have ordered our breakfast."

Rodolph wished the brigand to pass in first, for certain reasons of his own; but in this instance, the Schoolmaster insisted on showing so much politeness, that Rodolph entered before him. Before he sat down to table, the Schoolmaster tapped lightly against the panels of the wainscot, that he might ascertain their thickness, and power of transmitting sounds.

"We need not be afraid to speak out," said he; "the wainscot is not thin. We shall be served shortly, and after that we shall not be disturbed in our conversation."

A servant brought in the breakfast. Before he shut the door, Rodolph saw the charcoal-man, Murphy, gravely seated at a table in an adjoining room.

The apartment in which the scene we are describing took place, was long and narrow, lighted by a window which looked into the street, and was opposite to the door. The Chouette turned her back to this window; whilst the Schoolmaster was at one side of the table, and Rodolph on the other.

When the servant left the room, the brigand rose, took his plate, and seated himself beside Rodolph, so as to be between him and the door.

"We can converse better," he said, "and besides, we need not talk so loud."

"And you can also prevent me from going out," replied Rodolph, calmly.

The Schoolmaster nodded assent, and then, half drawing from the pocket of his coat a stiletto, round, and somewhat thicker than a goose-quill, and fitted into a wooden handle, which disappeared in the grasp of his hairy fingers, said: "You see that?"

"Yes."

"Advice to amateurs!" And bringing his shaggy brows together, by a movement which made his wide and flat forehead resemble that of a tiger, he made a significant gesture.

"And you may believe me, I have made the *pricker* sharp for my man," added the Chouette.

Rodolph, with marvellous ease and coolness, put his hand under his blouse, and drew out a double-barrelled pistol, which he showed to the Schoolmaster, and then returned it to his pocket.

"Very good; we are made to understand each other: and now I will suppose an impossibility. If they try to arrest me, and you have laid any trap for me, I'll make *cold meat* of you." And he glared ferociously at Rodolph.

"And I'll spring to his throat and help you, *fourline*," cried the Chouette.

Rodolph made no reply, but shrugged his shoulders, and, pouring out a glass of wine, drank it off. His coolness deceived the Schoolmaster.

"I merely give you warning."

"Very well, very well; put up your 'larding-pin' into your pocket: you have no chicken to lard. I am an old cock, and know my business," said Rodolph. "Now to our affair."

"Let us talk of business; but do not say a word against my 'larding-pin;' it makes no noise, and is in nobody's way."

"And does its work properly; doesn't it, *fourline*?" added the Chouette.

"By the way," said Rodolph to the Chouette, "is it true that you know the parents of La Gousleuse?"

"My man has two letters about that, but she will never see them—the little wretch! I would rather tear her eyes out with my own hands. Oh! when I meet her again at the *tapis-franc*, bad luck to her ——"

"There, there, Finette; we do nothing but talk; let us to business."

"May we 'patter' before her?" asked Rodolph.

"With perfect confidence! She's a tried one, and is worth her weight in gold as a look-out for us—to get information or impressions of keys, to conceal stolen goods or sell them—you may trust her to do anything. Oh, she possesses all the qualities of a first-rate woman! Good Finette!" added the brigand, extending his hand to the harridan. "You can have no idea of the services she has rendered me. But take off your shawl, Finette, or you'll be cold when you go out: put it on the chair with your basket."

The Chouette did so.

Notwithstanding his presence of mind, and the command which he had over himself, Rodolph could not conceal a movement of surprise when he saw suspended by a silver ring, from a thick chain of metal which hung round the old woman's neck, a small *Saint-Esprit* in lapis lazuli, precisely similar to that which the son of Madame Georges had round his neck at the time of his disappearance.

At this discovery, a sudden idea flashed across the mind of Rodolph. According to the Chourineur, the Schoolmaster, who had escaped from the hulks six months ago, had since eluded all search after him by disfiguring himself; and just six months ago the husband of Madame Georges had disappeared from the hulks, without a trace of him having been discovered. Rodolph surmised that the Schoolmaster was the husband of that unfortunate lady. If this were so, he knew the fate of the son she deplored—he possessed, moreover, some papers relative to the birth of

the Goualeuse. Rodolph had, then, fresh motives for persevering in his projects; and, fortunately, his absence of mind was not observed by the Schoolmaster, who was occupied in serving the Chouette.

"*Morbleu!* what a pretty chain!" said Rodolph to the one-eyed woman.

"Pretty, and not dear," responded the old hag, laughing. "It is only a sham till my man gives me a real one."

"That will depend on this gentleman, Finette. If our job with him comes off right, why then——"

"It is astonishing how well it is imitated," pursued Rodolph. "And what is that little blue thing?"

"It is a present from my man, till he gives me a *ticker*. Isn't it, *fourline*?"

Rodolph felt his suspicions half confirmed, and he anxiously waited for the reply of the Schoolmaster, who said: "Ay, but you must take care of that, notwithstandiug the ticker, Finette; it is a talisman—it brings good luck."

"A talisman!" said Rodolph, carelessly: "you don't believe in talismans, do you? And where the devil did you get that? Give me the address of the seller."

"They do not make them now, my dear sir—the shop is shut up. Such as you see it, that trinket is of great antiquity—three generations. I value it highly, for it is a kind of family tradition," added he, with a hideous grin; "and that's why I gave it to Finette, that she might have good luck in the enterprises in which she seconds me with such wonderful ability. Only see her at work!—only see her! If you and I go into *business* together, why—— But let us 'try back.' You say, that in the Allée des Veuves ——"

"There is, at No. 17, a house occupied by a very rich man, whose name is ——"

"I will not be guilty of the rudeness of demanding his name. There are sixty thousand francs in gold in a cabinet?"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold!" exclaimed the Chouette.

Rodolph nodded an affirmative.

"And you know the ways of this house," said the Schoolmaster.

"Thoroughly."

"And is the entrance difficult?"

"A wall seven feet high on the side of the Allée des Veuves, a garden, windows level with it, and the house consisting only of the ground-floor."

"And there is only the porter to guard the treasure?"

"Yes."

"And what is your plan of action, young man?"

"A very simple one: to climb over the wall, and either break the lock of the door, or force open a shutter. What's your opinion?"

"I cannot answer you before I have examined it all myself—that is, by the help of my woman: but, if all you tell me is exactly as you say, it appears to me that it is a thing to be done at once—this evening."

And the ruffian looked earnestly at Rodolph.

"This evening!—impossible!" replied he.

"Why, if the proprietor does not return until the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I—I cannot go this evening ——"

"Really? Well, and I—I cannot to-morrow."

"For what reason?"

"For the reason that prevents you this evening," said the brigand, with a chuckle.

After a moment's reflection, Rodolph resumed "Well, be it so—this evening, then. Where shall we meet?"

"We will not part company," said the Schoolmaster.

"Why not?"

"What is the use of separating? The weather has cleared up; we will take a walk together, and just give a look at the Allée des Veuves; you will see how my woman does her work. That done, we will return and play a hand at piquet, and have a bit of something to eat in a place in the Champs Elysées, that I know, close by the river; and, as the Allée des Veuves is deserted at an early hour, we will walk that way about ten o'clock."

"I will join you at nine o'clock."

"Do you wish that we should do business together, or not?"

"I do wish it."

"Very well; then we do not separate before evening, otherwise ——"

"Or what?"

"I shall believe that you are setting a trap for me, and that's why you wish to go now."

"If I wished to have you grabbed, what is to prevent me from doing so this evening?"

"Every thing. You did not expect that I should propose the affair to you so soon, and if you do not leave us you cannot put anybody on the scent."

"You suspect me, then?"

"Most decidedly. But as what you have told me may be true, and as the half of sixty thousand francs is worth going after, I am willing to have a shy for it; but it must be this evening, or never: if it is to be *never*, I shall know what to think of you, and one day or other I will take care and treat you to a dish of my own cooking."

"And I will return your compliment, rely upon it."

"Oh, this is all nonsense!" said the Chouette. "I agree with *fourline*, to-night or not at all."

Rodolph was in a state of cruel anxiety; if he suffered this opportunity to escape of laying hands on the Schoolmaster, he might never again meet with him. The ruffian, ever afterwards on his guard, or if recognised, apprehended, and taken back to the hulks, would carry with him those secrets which Rodolph had so much interest in knowing. Trusting to chance, and confiding in his address and courage, he said to the Schoolmaster: "I am your man, then; and we will not part company before the evening."

"Agreed. It is now about two o'clock—it is a long way from this to the Allée des Veuves—it is raining in torrents again—let us pay the bill and take a coach."

"If we have a coach, I should like to smoke a cigar first."

"Certainly," said the Schoolmaster. "Finette does not object to the smell of tobacco."

"Well, then, I'll go and get some cigars," said Rodolph, rising.

"Pray don't give yourself that trouble," said the Schoolmaster, stopping him: "Finette will go."

Rodolph resumed his seat. The Schoolmaster had penetrated his design. The Chouette went out.

"What a good manager I have there!" said the ruffian; "and so willing, she would throw herself into the fire for me."

"Talking of fire, it is none too hot here, re-

plied Rodolph, placing both his hands under his blouse. And then, continuing the conversation with the Schoolmaster, he took out a lead pencil and a slip of paper, which he had in his waistcoat-pocket, without being perceived, and wrote some words hastily, taking care to make the letters wide apart, so that they might be more legible, as he wrote under his blouse, and without seeing the paper.

This note having escaped the penetration of the Schoolmaster, the next thing was to get it to reach its address.

Rodolph rose mechanically, and went carelessly towards the window, and begun to hum a tune between his teeth, accompanying himself on the window-panes.

The Schoolmaster came up to the window, and said to Rodolph: "What air are you humming?"

"I am playing '*Tu n'auras pas ma rose.*'"

"That is a very pretty tune; I felt a little anxious to know if it would have the effect of inducing any of the passers-by to return?"

"I have no such pretension."

"You are wrong, young man; for you play the tambourine on that pane of glass with first-rate force. But I was thinking the porter of this house in the Allée des Veuves is perhaps a determined fellow; if he resists, you have only your pistol, which is a noisy weapon, whilst a tool like this (and he showed Rodolph the handle of his poignard) makes no noise, and does not disturb any body."

"Do you intend to assassinate him, then?" exclaimed Rodolph. "If you have any such idea, let us give up the job at once: I will have no hand in it—so don't rely on me——"

"But if he awakes?"

"We will run away."

"As you will; only I like to settle these things beforehand, to prevent confusion. So, then, ours will be simply a robbery, with forcible entry."

"Nothing more."

"That's very silly: but just as you like, as I have said."

"And as I will not leave you for a second," thought Rodolph, "I will prevent you from spilling blood."

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATIONS.

The Chouette returned to the cabaret with the cigars.

"It seems to have ceased raining now," said Rodolph, lighting his cigar. "Suppose we go and see after the coach ourselves—it will stretch our legs."

"What! left off raining!" replied the Schoolmaster: "are you then blind? Do you think I will expose Finette to the chance of catching cold, and risking her precious life, and spoiling her new shawl?"

"You are right, old boy: the weather is not fit for a dog. Let the servant come; we will pay, and desire him to fetch us a coach," replied Rodolph.

"Ay, ay, now you speak judiciously, young fellow; we may go and look about by the side of the Allée des Veuves."

The servant entered, and Rodolph gave him a five-franc piece.

"Ah! sir, you are too free—I cannot suffer it," exclaimed the Schoolmaster.

"Gammon—your turn next."

"Well, well, but on the condition that I shall offer you something, presently, in a little cabaret in the Champs Elysées, that I know of, an excellent crib."

"All right—go ahead."

The servant was paid, and they left the room.

Rodolph wished to go last, out of politeness to the Chouette; the Schoolmaster would not allow it, but kept a jealous eye on all his movements.

The keeper of the house also dealt in wine, and amongst the numerous customers, a charcoal-man, with his face blackened and his large hat flapping over his eyes, was paying his reckoning at the counter when these three personages appeared. In spite of the watchfulness of the Schoolmaster and the one-eyed woman, Rodolph, who walked before the hideous couple, exchanged a rapid and imperceptible glance with Murphy as he got into the coach.

"Which way, master?" asked the driver.

Rodolph replied, in a loud voice: "Allée des ——"

"Des Acacias, in the Bois de Boulogne," cried the Schoolmaster, interrupting him. Then he added: "And you will be well paid, coachman."

The door was shut.

"What the devil made you blab out which way we were going before those gaping fools?" said the Schoolmaster. "If the affair should be found out to-morrow, such an indication might ruin us. Young man—young man, you are very imprudent!"

The coach went on, as Rodolph answered: "That is true; I did not think of that. But with my cigar I shall smoke you like herrings: suppose I open a window?"

And suiting the action to the word, Rodolph, with much dexterity, dropped outside the window the small piece of paper, folded closely, on which he had hastily written the few words in pencil under his blouse. The glance of the Schoolmaster was so quick, that, in spite of the usual calmness of Rodolph's features, the ruffian no doubt detected some rapid expression of triumph, for, putting his head out at the window, he called to the driver: "Whip behind! whip behind! some one is getting up behind your coach!"

The coach stopped, and the driver, standing on his seat, looked back, and said: "No master, there's nobody."

"*Parbleu!* I should like to be sure of that," replied the Schoolmaster, jumping into the street.

Not seeing any person or any thing (for since Rodolph had dropped the paper the coach had proceeded several paces), the Schoolmaster thought he was mistaken.

"You will only laugh at me," said he, as he resumed his seat. "I don't know why, but I could have sworn some one was following us."

The coach at this moment turned into another street. Murphy, who had not lost sight of it, and who had seen Rodolph's manœuvre, ran and picked up the little note, which had fallen into an opening between two paving-stones.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour, the Schoolmaster said to the driver of the vehicle: "Never mind, my man, we have changed our minds: drive to the Place de la Madelaine."

Rodolph looked at him with astonishment.

"To be sure, young man; from that spot we may go to a thousand different places. If any inquiry is made for us hereafter, the deposition of the coachman will be of no use to them."

At the moment the coach approached the bar-

rier, a tall man, dressed in a long whitish riding-coat, with his hat drawn over his eyes, and whose complexion appeared of a deep brown, passed rapidly along the road, bending over the neck of a high, good-looking hunter, which was trotting at an extraordinary rate.

"A fine horse and a good rider!" said Rodolph, leaning towards the coach door, and looking after Murphy (for it was he). "What a pace that big man goes! Did you see him?"

"Faith, he passed so quickly," said the Schoolmaster, "that I did not notice him."

Rodolph perfectly concealed his joyous satisfaction. Murphy had, doubtless, decipherd the almost hieroglyphic characters of the note which had escaped the vigilance of the Schoolmaster. Certain that the coach was not followed, he had become re-assured, and wishing to imitate the Chouette, who slept, or rather pretended to sleep, he said to Rodolph: "Pardon me, young man, but the motion of the coach has always a singular effect on me — it sends me to sleep like a child."

"The ruffian, under the pretence of sleeping, proposed to examine whether the countenance of his companion betrayed any emotion. Rodolph suspected the design, and replied: "I rose early, and feel sleepy myself; so I will have a nap with you."

He shut his eyes, and very soon the loud snoring of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette so completely deceived Rodolph, that, thinking his companions sound asleep, he half-opened his eyes. The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, notwithstanding their loud snoring, had their eyes open, and exchanged some mysterious signs by means of placing their fingers in odd positions upon the palms of their hands. In an instant this symbolical language ceased; the brigand no doubt perceiving, by an almost imperceptible sign, that Rodolph was not asleep, and said, with a derisive laugh: "Ah, ah, comrade! what, you were trying your friends, were you?"

"That can't astonish you, who snore with your eyes wide open."

"I? That's different, young man: I am a somnambulist."

The coach stopped in the Place de la Madelaine. The rain had ceased for a moment, but the clouds, driven by the violence of the wind, were so black and so near the earth, that it was almost as dark as night. Rodolph, the Chouette, and the Schoolmaster, went towards the Cours la Reine.

"Young man, I have an idea, which is by no means a bad one," said the brigand.

"What is it?"

"To assure myself if all that you have said respecting the interior of the house in the Allée des Veuves is correct."

"You surely will not go there now, under any pretext? It would arouse suspicion."

"I am not such a flat as that, young man: but why have I a woman whose name is Finette?"

The Chouette raised her head.

"Do you see her, young man? Why, she looks like a war horse when he hears the trumpet sounding to the charge!"

"You would send her as a look-out?"

"Exactly."

"No. 17, Allée des Veuves, isn't it, my man?" cried the Chouette, impatiently. Be easy; I have but one eye, but that is a stunner."

"Do you see, young man—do you see?—she burns to be at it."

"If she manages to get in cleverly, your idea is not a bad one."

"Take care of the umbrella, *fourline;* in half-an-hour I will be here again, and you shall see how I will manage it," said the Chouette.

"One moment, Finette: we are going down to the *Bleeding Heart*—only two steps off. If the little *Tortillard** is there, you can take him with you: he can stop outside and watch the door whilst you go inside."

"You are right—little Tortillard is as cunning as a fox: he is not ten years old, and yet it was he who the other day ——"

A signal from the Schoolmaster interrupted the Chouette.

"What is this *Bleeding Heart?*—it is an odd sign for a cabaret," asked Rodolph.

"You had better complain to the landlord."

"What is his name?"

"The landlord of the *Bleeding Heart?*"

"Yes."

"Why do you ask? He never demands the name of his customers."

"But still ——"

"Call him what you will — Peter, Thomas, Christopher, or Barnabus, he will answer as readily to one as to the other. But here we are, and not any to soon either, for the bad weather is coming on again; and how the river roars!—it's like a torrent!—look at it! Two more days of such rain, and the water will be above the arches of the bridge."

"You said that we had arrived, but where the devil is the cabaret? I do not see any house here."

"Certainly not, if you only look round about you."

"And where would you have me look?"

"At your feet."

"At my feet?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"There—look: can't you see the roof? Take care you don't step upon it."

Rodolph had not, in fact, remarked one of those subterranean cabarets which a few years ago used to be seen in certain parts of the Champs Elysées, and particularly near the Cours la Reine.

A flight of steps, cut in the damp and greasy ground, led to the bottom of a sort of deep ditch, at one end of which, cut perpendicularly, stood a low, mean, dilapidated hovel. Its roof, covered with mossy tiles, scarcely rose above the ground on which Rodolph was standing; two or three huts, built of worm-eaten planks, serving as cellar, wood-house, and rabbit-hutches, completed this wretched den.

A narrow alley, traversing the entire length of this ditch, led from the stairs to the door of the house; the rest of the ground was hid under a mass of trellis-work, under the shelter of which were ranged two rows of clumsy tables, fastened to the ground. The wind caused a worn-out iron sign to swing heavily backwards and forwards on its creaking hinges, and through the rust that covered it might be distinguished *a red heart pierced with an arrow.* The sign was supported on a post erected above this cave—this veritable *human burrow.*

A thick, damp fog was added to the rain as night approached.

"Well, what say you to this hotel, young man?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Thanks to the torrents that have fallen for

* Cripple.

the last fortnight, it should be deliciously fresh. But go ahead."

"One moment—I wish to know if our host is at home. Listen!"

And the ruffian, thrusting his tongue forcibly against his palate, produced a singular noise—a sort of guttural sound, loud and lengthened, something like P-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!!! A similar cry arose from the depths of the hovel.

"He's there," said the Schoolmaster. "Pardon me, young man—respect to the ladies—allow the Chouette to pass first: I will follow you. Be careful—our friend's stairs are rather slippery."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLEEDING HEART.

THE host of the Bleeding Heart, after having responded to the signal of the Schoolmaster, civilly advanced to the threshold of the door.

This personage, whom Rodolph had been to search for in the City, and whom he did not yet know under his real name, or, rather, his habitual surname, was *Bras Rouge*.

Lank, mean-looking, and debilitated, this man might be about fifty years of age. His countenance bore a resemblance both to the weasel and the rat; his sharp nose, his receding chin, his high cheek-bones, his small eyes, black, restless, and keen, gave his features an inimitable expression of trickery, acuteness, and sagacity. An old brown wig, or, rather, as yellow as his bilious complexion, perched on the top of his head, shewed the nape of his bare, scraggy neck. He wore a round jacket, and one of those long black aprons commonly used by waiters at wine-shops.

Our three personages had scarcely descended the last step of the staircase, when a child not more than ten years of age, rickety, lame, and somewhat misshapen, came to rejoin Bras Rouge, whom he so strikingly resembled, that there was no mistaking them for father and son. They had the same quick and cunning look, joined to that impudent, hardened, and knavish air, which is peculiar to the scamp of Paris—that fearful type of precocious depravity, that veritable *seed of the hulks (graine de bagne)*, as they style it, in the terrible language of the prisons. The forehead of the brat was half hid beneath a thick thatch of yellowish hair, as harsh and stiff as bristles. Maroon-coloured trousers and a grey blouse, confined by a leather belt, completed the costume of Tortillard, thus named on account of his infirmity. He stood close to his father, perched on his sound leg, like a heron by the side of a marsh.

"There is the little darling!" said the Schoolmaster. "Finette, night is coming on, and time presses; we must profit by the daylight which remains."

"You are right, my man: I will ask the father to spare the little animal."

"Good day, old friend," said Bras Rouge, addressing the Schoolmaster, in a sharp, squeaking voice. "What can I do for you?"

"We want you to lend your young-un to my woman for a quarter of an hour; she has lost something close by, which he could help her to look for."

Bras Rouge winked his eye, made a significant sign to the Schoolmaster, and then said to his son: "Tortillard go with Madame."

The hideous child hopped forward, and took hold of the one-eyed woman's hand.

"You love of a bright boy! There is a child!" said Finette. "He comes to me at once!—not like Pegriotte, who always seemed to have a pain in her side when she came near me—the little beggar!"

"Come, be off with you, Finette! Keep your weather-eye open, old girl. I shall wait for you here."

"I won't keep you long. You go on first, Tortillard."

And the one-eyed hag and the little cripple began to ascend the slippery steps.

"Finette, take the umbrella," cried the brigand.

"It would be in the way, my man," said the old woman, who quickly disappeared with Tortillard in the midst of the fog, which thickened with the twilight, and the hollow murmur of the wind as it moaned through the thick and leafless branches of the giant elms of the Champs Elysées.

"Let us go in," said Rodolph.

He was obliged to stoop in passing in at the door of the cabaret, which was divided into two apartments. In the one were a counter and a broken-down billiard-table; in the other, tables and garden-chairs, which had once been painted green. Two narrow windows, with their cracked panes, thickly covered with cobwebs, admitted a feeble light into these rooms, the walls of which were damp and crumbling.

Rodolph was alone for a minute only. Bras Rouge and the Schoolmaster during that time exchanged some words, rapidly uttered, and made some mysterious signs.

"You'll take a glass of beer—or brandy, perhaps—while we wait for Finette?" said the Schoolmaster.

"No: I am not thirsty."

"Every one to his taste; for my part, I am for a glass of brandy," replied the ruffian; and he seated himself on one of the little green tables in the second apartment.

It now became so dark in this den, that it was impossible to see in one of the angles of this inner apartment the open mouth of one of those cellars which are entered by a double trap-door, one of which was always kept open for the convenience of serving. The table at which the Schoolmaster sat was close upon this dark and deep hole, to which he turned his back, so that it was entirely concealed from Rodolph's view.

The latter was looking through the window, to command his countenance and conceal the workings of his thoughts. The sight of Murphy galloping at full speed through the Allée des Veuves did not wholly assure him; he feared that the worthy squire had not quite understood the full meaning of his note, necessarily so laconic, and containing only these words:—"*This evening—ten o'clock. Be on your guard.*"

Determined not to go to the Allée des Veuves before that moment, nor to lose sight of the Schoolmaster for an instant, he now trembled more than ever at the idea of losing the only opportunity that might ever be afforded him of obtaining those secrets which he took so deep an interest in knowing. Although he was powerful and well armed, he yet found it necessary to resort to cunning to deal with an unscrupulous assassin, capable of any and every thing. Unwilling, however, that his thoughts should be guessed, he seated himself at the table with the Schoolmaster, and called for a glass of something to keep him company. Bras Rouge having exchanged a few words, in a low tone, with the

brigand, looked at Rodolph with an air of curiosity, distrust, and contempt.

"It is my advice, young man," said the Schoolmaster, "that if my woman finds the persons at home whom we want to see, we had better be with them about eight o'clock."

"That will be too early by two hours," said Rodolph; "and will incommode them."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Bah! there should be no ceremony amongst friends."

"I know them well, and I repeat that we ought not to go before ten o'clock."

"Are you crazy, young man?"

"You have my opinion, and devil fetch me if I stir from here before ten o'clock."

"Don't put yourself out of the way—I never close my establishment before midnight," said Bras Rouge, in his falsetto voice: "it is the time when my best customers arrive; and my neighbours never complain of the noise we make here."

"I suppose I must agree to whatever you wish, young man," continued the Schoolmaster. "Be it so, then: we will start upon our visit at ten o'clock."

"Here is the Chouette!" said Bras Rouge, hearing and replying to a warning cry similar to that uttered by the Schoolmaster before he descended to the subterraneous abode.

A minute afterwards the Chouette entered the billiard-room alone.

"It's all right, my man—right as a trivet!" cried the one-eyed woman as she entered.

Bras Rouge discreetly withdrew, without making any inquiry about Tortillard, whom probably he did not expect to see again just yet. The hag sat with her face towards Rodolph and the brigand.

"Well?" said the Schoolmaster.

"The lad has spoken the truth, so far."

"You see!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Let the Chouette explain, young man. Come, Finette, tell us all about it."

"I went straight to No. 17, and placed Tortillard in a ditch to keep a look-out. It was still daylight. I rung at a little side-door which opens outwards, having a space of about two inches between the bottom and the threshold—nothing worth notice. I rang; the porter opened. Before I rang, I put my bonnet in my pocket, that I might look like a neighbour. As soon as I saw the porter, I began to bellow with all my might, pretending that I had lost my parrot, Cocotte—a pretty little creature that I adored. I told him I lived in the Avenue de Marbœuf, and that I had pursued Cocotte from garden to garden. At length I entreated him to allow me to enter, to seek for my bird."

"There!" said the Schoolmaster, with an air of proud satisfaction, pointing to Finette, "what a woman!"

"It was very clever," said Rodolph. "But what then?"

"The porter allowed me to look for my bird, and I went trotting about the garden, calling, 'Cocotte! Cocotte!' and looking sharply about me in every direction at the same time. Inside the walls," resumed the old woman, continuing her description of the premises, "inside the walls, trellis-work all round—a perfect staircase; at the left-hand corner of the wall there is a tall fir-tree, just like a ladder—a woman in the family-way might descend by it. The house has six windows on the ground-floor; there is no other story—and there are four unbarred light-holes to the cellars. The windows of the ground-floor close with shutters, and have hooks below, and bolts and staples in the upper part: press in the bottom, use your steel file——"

"A shove," said the Schoolmaster, "and it is open."

The Chouette continued: "The entrance-door is glazed, with blinds outside——"

"What a memory!" said the ruffian.

"That's it, as precisely as though we were there," said Rodolph.

"To the left," resumed the Chouette, "near the court-yard, is a well: the rope might be serviceable (for at that particular spot there is no trellis-work against the wall), in case retreat should be cut off in the direction of the door. On entering the house——"

"You entered the house? She got into the house, young man!" said the Schoolmaster, with pride.

"Certainly, I got in! Not finding Cocotte, I had sobbed and cried so much, that I pretended I was quite out of breath: I begged the porter to allow me to sit down on the step of the door; the good man asked me into the house, and invited me to take a glass of wine and water. 'A glass of water,' I said; 'plain water only, my good sir.' Then he made me go into the antechamber—carpeted all over: excellent precaution!—footsteps nor the fall of glass cannot be heard, if we should be obliged to *mill* the *glaze*,* to the right and left are doors with sliding bolts, which open by a gentle push from the top. At the end of the room was a strong door, locked—it looked very much like a place for cash. I had my wax in my basket——"

"She had her wax, young man! she never goes without her wax!" said the brigand.

The Chouette continued: "It was necessary for me to approach the door which smelt so strongly of the *rhino*, so I pretended to be suddenly seized with a fit of coughing—so violent, that I was compelled to lean against the wall. On hearing me cough, the porter said: 'I'll go and get you a morsel of sugar to put in your water.' Most likely he looked for a spoon, for I heard the chink of plate—plate in the room on the right hand: don't forget that, *fourline*. Well, still coughing and groaning, I reached the door at the bottom of the room—I had my wax in the palm of my hand. I leaned against the lock, as if by accident, and as though I had nothing in my hand—and here is the impression: if it is of no use to-day, it may be at some other time."

And the Chouette gave the brigand a small piece of yellow wax, on which the form of the lock was perfectly impressed.

"Perhaps you can tell us whether this is really the door of the treasury," said the Chouette.

"Precisely so, and there is the *blunt*," replied Rodolph; and he then said to himself: "Then has Murphy been the dupe of this miserable woman? It may be so, and he will not expect to be attacked before ten o'clock; by which time every precaution will have been taken."

"But all the money is not there," continued the Chouette, her one green eye sparkling with triumph. "As I approached the windows, still looking for Cocotte, I saw in one of the rooms to the left of the door, some bags of crown-pieces on a bureau. I saw them as plainly as I see you, my man; and there were at least a dozen of them."

* Break the windows.

"Where is Tortillard?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"He is still in the ditch—not more than two paces from the door of the garden. He can see in the dark like the cats. There is only that entrance to No. 17, so when we go he will tell us if any one has been."

"That's good——"

Scarcely had the Schoolmaster uttered these words than he threw himself suddenly upon Rodolph, seized him by the throat, and threw him violently down the cellar, which was yawning behind the table.

The attack was so rapid, unexpected, and powerful, that Rodolph could neither foresee nor avoid it. The Chouette, alarmed, uttered a piercing cry; for at the first she had not perceived the result of this momentary struggle. When the noise of Rodolph's body falling down the steps had ceased, the Schoolmaster, who knew perfectly all the subterranean arrangements of the place, descended the stairs slowly, listening attentively as he went.

"Fourline, be on your guard!" cried the one-eyed woman, leaning over the opening of the trap: "be ready with your *pinking-iron*." *

The brigand disappeared without making any reply. For a time nothing was heard, but after a few moments the distant noise of a door, which creaked on its rusty hinges, rose dismally from the depths of the cavern: then all was silent again. The darkness was complete. The Chouette fumbled in her basket, and then, striking a chemical match, lighted a small candle, which shed a feeble ray through the dreary room.

At this moment the monstrous countenance of the Schoolmaster appeared at the opening of the trap. The Chouette could not repress a cry of terror at the sight of his ghastly, seamed, mutilated, and horrible face, with eyes that gleamed like phosphorus, and appeared to glare on the ground in the midst of the darkness which the lighted taper failed to dissipate. Recovering from her frightful emotion, the old wretch exclaimed, in a tone of hellish flattery: "You must be frightful indeed, *fourline*, for even I had my fears—yes, I!"

"Quick, quick, for the Allée des Veuves!" said the ruffian, securely closing the two flaps of the door with a bar of iron. "In another hour, perhaps, it will be too late. If it is a trap, it is not yet baited; if it is not, why we can do the job by ourselves."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CELLAR.

STUNNED by his horrible fall, Rodolph lay senseless and motionless at the bottom of the stairs of the cellar. The Schoolmaster, dragging him to the entrance of a second and still deeper cavern, thrust him into it, and closing and securely bolting a thick, iron-clamped door, returned to the Chouette, who was waiting to join him in the committal of a robbery, and perhaps a murder, in the Allée des Veuves.

In about an hour Rodolph began gradually to recover his senses. He was extended on the ground, surrounded by thick darkness; he felt around with his hand, and touched the stone stairs leading to the vault. Finding his feet very cold, he put down his hand, and discovered that he was in a pool of water.

By a violent effort he succeeded in seating himself upon the lower step of the staircase; his confusion by degrees passed away; he made some movements, and found, that, fortunately, none of his limbs were broken. He listened, but could hear nothing, except a dull, feeble, but continuous dripping. At first he did not suspect the cause of this. As his thoughts became clearer, the circumstances of the surprise of which he had been the victim, returned to his mind, but still slowly and imperfectly. He was just upon the point of collecting all his reminiscences, when he felt his feet again cold. He put down his hand; the water was rising—it was above his ancle. And amidst the melancholy silence by which he was surrounded, he heard more and more distinctly, the still, constant, *drip! drip!* and now he could but too well explain that sound—the waters were rushing into the cellar! The rise of the Seine, from the recent rains, was formidable, and this dungeon was below the level of the river. This danger completely recalled Rodolph to himself; quick as lightning he ascended the damp staircase. Arrived at the top, and perceiving the exact state of things, he threw himself violently against the door; but it was in vain he tried to burst it open—its massy hinges resisted his utmost efforts to force them.

In this desperate situation his first cry was for Murphy. "If he is not on his guard, that monster will assassinate him," thought Rodolph; "and it is I—*I*, to whom he will owe his destruction! Poor Murphy!" This cruel thought gave new strength to Rodolph, and he again, with incredible efforts, assailed the door; but these endeavours, like the former ones, were totally inadequate, they did not even shake it. Hoping to find something in the cellar, which would act as a lever, he went down the steps again, the water being now above his knees; but all search was in vain: he could find nothing. As he placed his foot upon the lower step, to ascend again, two or three round, soft bodies, pressed by his foot, escaped with cries of pain or terror. They were rats, which the rushing waters had driven from their holes. Rodolph ascended the stairs in dark, deep, and utter despair. As he did so, he counted the steps; there were but thirteen, and three were already under water. Thirteen! A fatal number! In certain positions, even the finest minds are not exempt from superstitious ideas. In this number Rodolph saw a fatal omen. The possible fate of Murphy recurred to his mind. In vain he sought for some opening between the ground and the door: the humidity had, no doubt, swelled the latter, for it was hermetically joined to the damp and clayey soil. Rodolph now uttered loud cries, in the hope of being heard by some of the guests of the cabaret; and then he listened in an agony of suspense. Still he heard nothing, save the small, dull, feeble dripping of the ever encroaching waters, which still rose, rose, and rose—bringing his obscure and miserable death nearer and nearer.

Rodolph, overwhelmed and despairing, now seated himself on the topmost step, his back leaning against the door; he wept for his friend, who, probably, was at that instant struggling beneath the knife of the assassin. Most bitterly did he now regret his imprudent and audacious projects, generous as was their motive. He remembered, with agony, a thousand proofs of the devotedness of Murphy, who, rich and honoured, had quitted a beloved wife and child, and his own most cherished interests, to follow and aid

* Poignard.

THE NEGRO DOCTOR.

Rodolph in the noble expiation which the latter had imposed upon himself.

The waters still rose—only five steps now remained dry. On assuming a standing positon, Rodolph with his head touched the vaulted roof of the cellar: he could now calculate how long his agony would endure. The death which threatened him was slow, silent, and frightful. He recollected his pistol: at the risk of mutilating himself, by blowing away the lock of the door, he might, perhaps, escape from this horrible confinement. Alas! in his fall he had lost the weapon, or it had been carried away by the Schoolmaster.

But for his fears on Murphy's account, Rodolph would have waited for death with comparative serenity. He had loved much, he had been ardently loved, he had done good, and he would fain have continued to do so—God knew it! Far from murmuring against his fate, he only saw in that destiny the just punishment of a fatal action, not yet expiated; and his thoughts became greater and more elevated as his peril increased.

A new horror now occurred to try his resignation. The rats, chased by the waters, had taken refuge from step to step, still unable to find any outlet by which to escape, and now, in their inability to climb the perpendicular walls or doors, they sought refuge on the garments of Rodolph. His horror and disgust were unspeakable, as he felt their cold, clammy paws, and wet, hairy bodies, crawling or clinging to him. He endeavoured to beat them off, and cold, sharp bites bathed his hands in blood. Far and violently he hurled away the unclean and loathsome reptiles, as fast as he could tear them from his clothes; but they speedily swam back to him. Again he raised his voice in wild shouts of agony; and again he listened—but, alas! the dull echo of the vault and the gurgling waters alone replied. A few short moments, and he would be bereft even of the power of calling upon God or man to help him; the rapidly rising flood had now reached his very throat, and ere long would have ascended to his lips!

The pent-up air now began to fail; the first symptoms of asphyxia overwhelmed Rodolph; his temporal arteries beat violently, his brain swam—he was at the point of death. With one parting thought to his faithful Murphy, he lifted up his soul to God—not to be rescued from the danger, but that his sufferings might be accepted as an expiation.

At this awful moment, when on the point of quitting, not only all which makes life happy, brilliant, and envied, but also an almost royal title, and sovereign power — compelled to renounce an enterprise, which, in satisfying his two impassioned instincts—the love of good and the hatred of evil—might at some future day be taken in atonement of his faults; and close as he was now to destruction by a frightful death, Rodolph had none of those movements of rage and of impotent frenzy, during which feeble souls curse or accuse, now men, now fate, now the Deity himself. No! as long as his faculties remained clear, Rodolph bore his fate with submission, with calmness, and with respect. When agony, at length, obscured his ideas, and he was absolutely delivered up to the mere instinct of vitality, he struggled, if we may so express it, physically, not morally, against his impending death.

Vertigo now carried away the thoughts of Rodolph in its rapid and frightful whirl: the water bubbled in his ears; he seemed to turn round and round with maddening swiftness; the last faint ray of his reason was on the point of departing, when hasty steps and the noise of voices sounded outside the door of the cellar.

Hope reanimated the expiring faculties of Rodolph; by an almost miraculous tension of mind, he could catch these words, the last of which he heard and understood: "You see, *yourself*," said one voice, "there is no one here."

"Thousand thunders! that is true," said the voice of the Chourineur. And then the sound of footsteps died away.

Rodolph, crushed, annihilated, could bear no more; his limbs sunk from under him, and he slid, a helpless mass, down the stone steps.

Suddenly the door of the cellar was opened noisily from without; the water contained in the subterraneous dungeon rushed out as on the opening of a sluice; and the Chourineur (whose opportune return shall be accounted for by and by) was able to seize the two arms of Rodolph, who, half drowned, was still convulsively, though insensibly, grasping the threshold of the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SICK-NURSE.

Rescued from inevitable death, by the Chourineur, and removed to the house in the Allée des Veuves, which had been reconnoitered by the Chouette previous to the attempt on it by the Schoolmaster, Rodolph was placed in bed, in a comfortably-furnished room: a large fire diffused its cheering warmth; a lamp, placed on a table close at hand, shed a strong, clear light through the apartment; while the bed of Rodolph, shaded by thick curtains of green damask, remained in comparative obscurity.

A Negro of middling stature, with white hair and eyebrows, wearing an orange and green riband at the button-hole of his blue coat, seated by the bedside, held in his right hand a seconds' watch, which he appeared to consult while counting with his left hand the beating of Rodolph's pulse. The Negro, with a sad and pensive countenance, continued to watch his sleeping patient with the most tender solicitude.

The Chourineur, wretchedly clad, and bedaubed with mud, stood mute and motionless, his arms hanging listlessly down, and his hands across, at the foot of the bed; his red beard was long and disordered; his thick bushy hair was matted with mud and wet; while his hard, bronzed features wore an expression of the most profound pity for the patient. He breathed with constraint, lest the noise should disturb the invalid. Uneasy at the meditative attitude of the black doctor, and fearing some fatal prognostic, he hazarded, in a low whisper, this philosophic reflection, as he gazed upon Rodolph: "Who would suppose now, seeing him lying there so helpless, he could ever have given me the drubbing that he did. He will soon get his strength again, and be as well as ever; don't you think so, Mr. Doctor. By my faith, I would not mind his beating the news of his recovery on my back, if that would do him any good; but I suppose that would shake him too much, wouldn't it, sir?"

The Negro answered with an impatient wave of the hand, and the Chourineur was silent.

"The draught!" said the doctor.

The Chourineur, who had respectfully left his iron-shod clogs at the door, at these words went on tiptoe towards the table indicated by the

Negro's finger; drawing up his legs, extending his arms, and swelling out his back and shoulders in a manner so ludicrous as, under other circumstances, would have been highly diverting. The poor fellow seemed endeavouring to collect his whole weight in that part of his body which did not touch the floor; but with all this care, and in spite of the carpet, the room trembled beneath his ponderous weight. Unfortunately, between his ardour to acquit himself handily, and his fear of dropping the delicate phial he was bringing so over-carefully, he squeezed the slight neck so tightly in his huge hand, that it shivered to atoms, and the precious liquid was spilled on the carpet.

At the sight of this misfortune, the Chourineur remained in mute astonishment, one of his huge legs in the air, his toes nervously contracted, and looking with a stupefied air alternately from the doctor to the fragments of the bottle, which still remained in his hand.

"Awkward devil!" exclaimed the Negro, impatiently.

"Thundering booby that I am!" added the Chourineur, apostrophising himself.

"Ah!" cried the Æsculapius, as he looked at the table, "happily you took the wrong phial—I wanted the other one."

"That little one with the red stuff?" humbly inquired the unlucky sick-nurse.

"Certainly—there is but that."

The Chourineur, turning quickly round upon his heels, after his old military fashion, crushed the fragments of glass; feet more delicate might have suffered severely from the circumstance, but the *ex-débardeur* had a pair of natural sandals, hard as the hoofs of a horse.

"Have a care! you will wound yourself!" cried the physician.

The Chourineur paid no attention to this recommendation, but seemed wholly absorbed in discharging his new mission in a manner that would effectually destroy all recollection of his former clumsiness. It was truly delightful to see with what scrupulous delicacy and lightness of touch, spreading out his two first fingers, he seized the fragile crystal. A butterfly might have passed between his thumb and forefinger, with outspread wings, without losing one atom of the golden dust from its wings. The black doctor trembled lest some new accident should arise from this excess of caution; but, happily, the potion reached its destination in safety. As the Chourineur approached the bed, he again smashed beneath his tread some of the fragments of the broken phial.

"The devil!" whispered the doctor; "do you want to lame yourself?"

"*Lame* myself, Mr. Doctor?"

"Yes: don't you see you are walking on the broken glass?"

"Oh, never mind that; the soles of my feet are as hard as an elephant's—glass won't hurt 'em."

"A small spoon ——" said the doctor.

The Chourineur recommenced his *évolutions sylphidiques*, and fetched the article required.

After a few spoonsful of the mixture had been administered, Rodolph stirred, and feebly moved his hands.

"Good! good! he is recovering from his stupor," said the doctor to himself. "The bleeding has relieved him: he is now out of danger."

"Saved? Bravo! Vive la Charte!" exclaimed the Chourineur, in the full burst of his joy.

"Hold your tongue, and be quiet!" said the Negro.

"Yes, Mr. Doctor."

"His pulse is more regular—come, come, that will do ——"

"And that poor friend of Mr. Rodolph's—thunder and lightning! when he hears that —— As luck would have it ——"

"Silence!"

"Yes, Mr. Doctor."

"And sit down, will you?"

"But, Mr. ——"

"Sit down, I say! You disturb me, with your twisting and fidgeting—you distract my attention. Pray sit down, and be quiet."

"Mr. Doctor, I am as dirty as a pile of floating wood just going to be unloaded. I should spoil the furniture."

"Then sit down on the ground."

"I should dirty the carpet."

"Do what you like, but, for Heaven's sake, be quiet!" said the doctor, in a tone of impatience; then, seating himself in an arm-chair, he leaned his head upon his hands.

After a moment of profound meditation, the Chourineur, less from any need for repose than to obey the doctor's commands, took a chair with the greatest precaution, turned it upside down with an air of consummate self-satisfaction at having at length devised a plan to act in strict conformity with the orders received, and yet avoid all risk of soiling the silken cushion: having laid the back on the ground he proceeded, after all manner of delicate arrangements, to take his seat on the outer rails; but, unhappily, the Chourineur was entirely ignorant of the laws of the lever and the equilibrium of bodies—the chair overbalanced, and the luckless fellow, making a sudden movement to save himself from falling, capsized a tray of tea-things.

At the formidable noise caused by this disaster, the doctor sprung from his seat; while Rodolph, awaking with a start, raised himself on his elbow, looked anxiously about him, as though trying to arrange his ideas, and exclaimed: "Murphy! where is Murphy?"

"Your royal highness may rest assured," answered the Negro, respectfully, "there is every hope of his recovery."

"He is, then, wounded?" cried Rodolph.

"Alas! yes, my lord."

"Where is he? let me see him!" And Rodolph endeavoured to rise, but fell back again, overcome by weakness and the intense pain he felt from his many and severe contusions. "Carry me on the instant to Murphy, since I cannot walk!" he exclaimed.

"My lord, he sleeps: it would be dangerous, at this moment, to expose him to the slightest cause for emotion."

"Ah! you are deceiving me—he is dead! He has been murdered! and I—I am the cause of it!" cried Rodolph in a tone of agony, raising his clasped hands towards heaven.

"My lord knows that I am incapable of a falsehood. I affirm, by my honour, that Murphy lives, although severely wounded, and that his chance of recovery is all but certain."

"You say that but to prepare me for other and more disastrous tidings: he is, doubtless, in a dangerous state."

"My lord ——"

"Yes, you endeavour to deceive me, I will see him instantly; take me to him: the sight of a friend is always salutary."

"Once more, my lord, I solemnly affirm to your royal highness, that, saving chances not likely to occur, Murphy will soon be convalescent."

"Is it indeed true, my dear David?"

"Indeed it is, my lord."

"Hear me. You know the high opinion I entertain of you; from the hour you were attached to my household, you have always possessed my confidence—never have you given me any reason to doubt you; but I conjure you, if a consultation be necessary ——"

"That was my first thought, my lord; but, up to the present moment a consultation would be both useless and unnecessary. And, besides, I should be somewhat tenacious of introducing strangers here, until I knew whether your orders of yesterday ——"

"But how has all this happened?" said Rodolph, interrupting the black. "Who saved me from drowning in that dreadful cavern? I have a confused recollection of having heard the Chourineur's voice there: was I mistaken?"

"No, no; the brave fellow of whom you speak, my lord, will relate ——"

"But where is he? where is he?"

The doctor looked around for the recently elected sick-nurse, who, ashamed at his clumsiness, had ensconced himself behind the curtains of the bed.

"Here he is," said the doctor: "he appears somewhat bashful."

"Come forward, my brave fellow!" said Rodolph, extending his hand to his preserver.

The confusion of the Chourineur was still further increased from his having heard the black doctor address Rodolph continually as "my lord," or "your royal highness."

"Come here," said Rodolph, "and give me your hand."

"I beg pardon, sir—I mean, my lord—no, highness—but ——"

"Call me Mr. Rodolph, as you always did: I prefer that."

"And so do I—I can say it easier. But be so good as to excuse my hand: I have done so much work lately, that ——"

"Your hand, I tell you!"

Overcome by this kind and persevering command, the Chourineur timidly extended his black and horny hand, which Rodolph cordially shook.

"Now, then, sit down, and tell me all about it—how you discovered the cellar. But I think I can guess. The Schoolmaster?"

"He is here in safety," said the black doctor.

"He and the Chouette, tied together like two rolls of tobacco—as pretty a pair as ever you put your eyes on, and no doubt tired enough of each other's company by this time."

"And my poor Murphy! Great God! and I to think only of myself! Where is he wounded, David?"

"In the right side, my lord; but, fortunately, towards the lower false rib."

"Oh, I must have a terrible revenge! David, I depend upon you."

"My lord knows that I am his, both body and soul," replied the Negro, coldly.

"But how were you able to arrive here in time, my brave man," said Rodolph to the Chourineur.

"If you please, my lor——no, sir—highness—Rodolph—I had better begin with the beginning——"

"Quite right. I am listening. But mind you call me Mr. Rodolph."

"Very well. You know that last evening you said to me, after you returned from the country, where you had gone with poor Goualeuse: 'Try and find the Schoolmaster in the City; tell him you know of some capital business; that you have refused to join in it, but that if he will take your place, he has only to be to-morrow (that's to-day) at the barrier of Bercy, at the Panier-Fleuri, and there he will see the man who *put up* the job.'"

"Well?"

"On leaving you, I trotted to the City. I goes to the ogress's—no Schoolmaster; then to the Rue Saint Eloi; on to the Rue aux Fêves; then to the Rue de la Vieille Draperie—no game. At last I stumbled upon him and that old devil's own, Chouette, in the front of Notre Dame, at the shop of a tailor, who does a bit of *fencing*,* and fills up his time at *prigging*: they were laying out the *shiners* which they had got from the tall gentleman in black, who wanted to do something to you; they bought themselves some *swell toggery*. The Chouette bargained for a red shawl—the old monster! I *chaunted my lay* to the Schoolmaster, who jumped at it, and said he would be at the rendezvous. Good! This morning, according to your orders, I ran here to bring you the answer. You said to me: 'My lad, return to-morrow before day-break; you must pass the day in my house, and in the evening you will see something worth looking at.' You did not let out more than that, but I was *down*, and said to myself: 'This is a move to nab the Schoolmaster to-morrow. He is a —— thief; he murdered the cattle-dealer, and, as they say, another person besides, in the Rue du Roule. I *twig* it ——'"

"And my mistake was not to have told you all, my boy; then this horrible catastrophe would not have occurred."

"That was your look out, Mr. Rodolph; all that concerned me was to serve you: for, in fact, I don't know how or why, but, as I have said before, I feel as if I were your bull-dog. But that's nothing. Then I says to myself: 'Mr. Rodolph pays me for my time, so my time is his, and I will employ it for him. Then an idea strikes me: the Schoolmaster is cunning, he may fear a trap. Mr. Rodolph will propose to him the job for to-morrow, it is true, but the 'leary cove' is likely enough to make it to-day, and lurk about here, and reconnoitre the ground, and if he is suspicious of Mr. Rodolph, he will bring some other *cracksman*† with him, and the job will be done at once. To prevent this, I says to myself: 'I must go and plant myself somewhere where I can get a view of the walls, the garden-door—there is only that entrance. If I find a snug corner, as it rains, I will remain there all day, if not all night, and to-morrow morning I shall be all ready to go with Mr. Rodolph.' So I goes then to the Allée des Veuves, to find my corner. What did I see? A small tavern, not ten paces from your door! I entered, drew up the blind, and took my seat near the window. I called for a litre of wine, and a quart of nuts, saying I expected some friends—a hump-backed man and a tall woman. I chose them because it would look more natural like. I was very comfortably installed, and kept a sharp eye on

* Receiving stolen goods.
† Housebreaker.

the door. It rained preciously—nobody came; and so, night coming on ——"

"But," interrupted Rodolph, "why did you not come at once to me?"

"You told me to come the following morning, Mr. Rodolph. I didn't dare return there sooner: I should have looked like an intruder—a *brosseur*, as the troopers call it. You know what I mean? Well, there I was at the window of the wine-shop, cracking my nuts and drinking my liquor, when, through the mist, I saw the Chouette approach, accompanied by Bras Rouge's brat, little Tortillard. 'Ah, ah!' said I to myself, 'now the play begins!' Well, the little beggar of a boy hid himself in one of the ditches of the Allée, and was evidently on the look-out. As for that —— the Chouette, she takes off her bonnet, puts it into her pocket, and rings the bell of the garden-gate. Our poor friend, Mr. Murphy, opened the door, and the one-eyed old devil tosses up her arms, and makes her way into the garden. I could have kicked myself for not being able to make out what the Chouette was up to. At last, out she comes, puts on her bonnet, says two words to Tortillard, who returns to his hole, and then away she cuts, I saying to myself: 'Caution! no blunder now! Tortillard has come with the Chouette: then the Schoolmaster and Mr. Rodolph are at Bras Rouge's. The Chouette has come out to *gun* the house: then, sure as death, they'll *try it on* this very night! If they do, Mr. Rodolph, who believes they will not go to work till to-morrow, is quite mistaken; and if he is over-reached, I ought to go to Bras Rouge's and see for him. True: but then suppose that the Schoolmaster comes in the meantime—that's to be thought of. Suppose I go to the house and see Mr. Murphy—mind your eye! ware hawk! that devil Tortillard is near the door; he will hear me ring the bell, see me, and give the *office* to the Chouette; and if she returns, that will spoil all; and the more particularly as Mr. Rodolph has, perhaps, after all, made his arrangements for this evening.' Confound it! these *pros* and *cons* bothered my brain tremendously. I was quite bewildered, and saw nothing clear before me. I didn't know what to do for the best, so I said: 'I'll walk out, and perhaps the air will brighten my thoughts a bit.' I went out, and the open air cleared my brain; so I took off my blouse and my neckerchief, and toddling to the ditch where Tortillard lay, and taking the young monkey by the scruff of his neck—how he did wriggle, and twist, and scuffle, and scratch—I put him into my blouse, tying up one end with the sleeves, and the bottom tightly with my cravat. He could breathe very well. Well, then I took the bundle under my arm, and passing a low, damp garden, surrounded by a little wall, I threw Tortillard into the middle of a cabbage-bed. He squeaked like a sucking-pig, but nobody could hear him two steps off. I cut away, and not before it was time. I climbed up one of the high trees in the Allée, just in front of your door, and over the ditch in which Tortillard had been stationed. Ten minutes afterwards, I heard footsteps. It was raining still, and the night was very dark. I listened—it was the Chouette. 'Tortillard! Tortillard!' says she, in a low voice. 'It rains, and the little devil is tired of waiting,' said the Schoolmaster, swearing: 'if I catch him, I'll break his neck!' 'Fourline, take care!' replied the Chouette. 'Perhaps he has gone to warn us of something that has happened—or to set a trap for us. The other cove would not make the attempt till ten o'clock.' 'That's the very reason,' responds the Schoolmaster: 'it is now only seven o'clock. You saw the money—nothing venture, nothing have. Give me the ripping chisel and the *jemmy* ——"

"What instruments are they?"

"They came from Bras Rouge's. Oh, he has a well-furnished house! In a crack the door is opened. 'Stay where you are,' said the Schoolmaster to the Chouette; 'keep a good look-out, and give me the *office* if you hear any thing.' 'Put your *pinking-iron* in the button-hole of your waistcoat, that you may have it handy,' said the one-eyed woman. The Schoolmaster entered the garden, and I, instantly coming down from the tree, fell on the Chouette. I silenced her with two blows of my fist—my new style—and she fell without a sigh. I ran into the garden, but, thunder and lightning, Mr. Rodolph! it was too late ——"

"Poor Murphy!"

"He was struggling with the Schoolmaster at the little entrance, and, although wounded, he made no cry for help. Brave man! he is like a good dog—bites, but doesn't bark. I went bang at it, heads or tails, hitting the Schoolmaster on the shoulder, which was the only place I could at the moment get at. 'Vive la Charte! it's I!' 'The Chourineur!' shouts Mr. Murphy. 'Ah, villain! where do you come from?' cries the Schoolmaster, quite taken aback at that. 'What's that to you?' says I, fixing one of his legs between my knees, and grasping his *flipper* with my other hand: it was that in which he held his poignard. 'And Mr. Rodolph?' asked Mr. Murphy of me, whilst doing all in his power to aid me ——"

"Brave, excellent man!" murmured Rodolph, in a tone of deep distress.

"'I know nothing of him,' says I; 'this villain, perhaps, has killed him.' And then I went with redoubled fury at the Schoolmaster, who tried to stick me with his larding-pin; but I lay with my breast on his arm, and so he had only his fist at liberty. 'You are, then, by yourself?' says I to Mr. Murphy, whilst we continued struggling desperately with the Schoolmaster. 'There are people close by here,' he replied; 'but they did not hear me cry out.' 'Is it far off?' 'They would be here in ten minutes.' 'Let us call for help, there are passers-by who will come to our aid. 'No, as we have got him, we must keep him here. But I am growing weak—I am wounded.' 'Thunder and lightning! then run and look for some assistance, if you have strength left: I will try and hold him.' Mr. Murphy then disengaged himself, and I was alone with the Schoolmaster. Great guns! those were moments when I had my work to do. We were partly on the ground, partly on the bottom step of the flight. I had my arms round the neck of the villain—my cheek against his cheek: he was puffing like a bull—I heard his teeth grind. It was dark—it rained a pelter: the lamp left in the passage gave but little light. I had twisted one of my legs round his; but in spite of that, his loins were so powerful, that he moved us both on to the bare ground. He tried to bite me, but couldn't: I never in my life felt so strong. Thunder! my heart beat, but it was in the right place. I said: 'I am like a man who is grappling with a mad dog, to prevent him from biting somebody.' 'Let me go, and I will do nothing to you,' said the Schoolmaster,

[The Punishment.]

in an exhausted voice. 'Ah! you are funking! says I to him; 'so, then, your pluck is in your strength! You wouldn't have murdered the cattle-dealer of Poissy, and robbed him, if he had only been as strong as me—eh?' 'No,' says he; 'but I will serve you as I did him.' And saying that, he made so violent a body-heave, and gave so powerful a jerk with his legs at the same time, that he half threw me over: if I had not kept a tight hold of the wrist that grasped the stiletto, I was finished. At this moment my left hand slipped, and I was compelled to slacken my hold. that nearly spoiled all. I said to myself: 'I am under, and he is above—he'll kill me. But no matter, I had rather be in my place than his; since Mr. Rodolph said that I had heart and honour.' I felt it was all up, and at that moment I saw the Chouette standing close by us, with her round green eye and her fine red shawl. Thunder and lightning! I thought I had the nightmare! 'Finette,' cries the Schoolmaster, 'I have lost my knife: pick it up, and strike him home—in the back—between the shoulders: quick! quick!' Stop, stop, *fourline;* only wait till I find it.' And the Chouette turned this way and that way, like an ill-omened bird as she was. At last she saw the dagger, and tried to spring towards it; but as I was flat on my belly, I gave her a kick in the stomach, which sent her completely over. She sprang up again, more fierce than ever. I could do no more; I clung convulsively to the neck of the Schoolmaster, but he gave me such dreadful blows on the jaw, that I was about to let go my hold, when I saw three or four jolly fellows, well armed, who came down the steps, and Mr. Murphy, pale as death, supporting himself on the arm of the doctor. They seized upon the Schoolmaster and the Chouette, and secured them hand and foot. That was not all—I wanted Mr. Rodolph. I

sprang at the Chouette: remembering the tooth of poor Goualeuse, I gripped the old hag's arm with all my might, and twisted it, saying: 'Where is Mr. Rodolph?' She bore it well, and without a word; so I gave her arm another half-turn, and she bawled out: 'At Bras Rouge's, in the cellar, at the Bleeding Heart. Good! Off I went, intending to pick up Tortillard as I passed; I looked, but only found my blouse—he had fairly gnawed his way out. I reached the Bleeding Heart; I seized Bras Rouge by the throat, and said: 'Where is the young man who came here this evening with the Schoolmaster?' 'Don't squeeze me so hard, and I'll tell you. They have been playing a trick with him, and have shut him up in my cellar.' Down we went, but there was no one to be found. 'No doubt he has gone away while my back was turned,' said Bras Rouge; 'you see he is not here.' I was coming away very sorrowful, when, by the light of the lantern, I saw at the bottom of the cellar another door. I ran and opened it, and had, as it were, a bucket of water chucked over my head and face. I saw your poor arms in the air; I fished you out, and brought you hither on my back, as there was nobody at hand whom I could send for a hackney-coach. That's all I have to say, Mr. Rodolph; and though I do not wish to boast, I don't think I have done amiss, and feel very well satisfied with myself."

"My lad, I owe my life to you; and though a heavy debt, you may rely upon a satisfactory settlement. David, will you go and ascertain how Murphy is," added Rodolph, "and return to me immediately."

The black went out.

"Where is the Schoolmaster, my boy?"

"In a room, with the Chouette. You will send for the police, Mr. Rodolph?"

"No."

"You are not going to let him off? Ah, Mr. Rodolph, do not be too generous to him. I say again, he is no better than a mad dog—let the passengers beware!"

"He will bite no one again, be assured."

"Then you will shut him up somewhere?"

"No; in half an hour he will depart from here."

"The Schoolmaster?"

"Yes."

"Without gens d'armes?"

"Yes."

"He will leave here—free?"

"Free."

"And quite alone?"

"Quite alone."

"But he will go ——"

"Wherever he pleases," said Rodolph, interrupting the Chourineur with a meaning smile.

The black returned.

"Well, David, and how is poor Murphy?"

"He sleeps, my lord," said the doctor, sadly: "his respiration is difficult ——"

"Still in danger?"

"His case is serious, my lord; nevertheless, there is hope that ——"

"Oh, Murphy! vengeance! vengeance!" exclaimed Rodolph, in a tone of concentrated fury. Then he added: "David, a word ——"

And he whispered something in the ear of the black, which caused a shudder.

"Do you hesitate?" said Rodolph. "I have often spoken to you of this idea: the moment for acting upon it is now arrived."

"I do not hesitate, my lord: the idea contains in itself a penal reform well worthy the consideration of the highest jurists, for such a punishment would be at the same time terrible, and fruitful for repentance. In this case it is peculiarly applicable. Without reckoning the crimes which sent this wretch to the hulks for life, he has committed three murders—the cattle-dealer, Murphy, and yourself: it is, therefore, justice ——"

"He will have before him a boundless horizon for expiation," added Rodolph. After a moment's silence, he said: "And five thousand francs will suffice, David?"

"Perfectly, my lord."

"My lad," said Rodolph to the Chourineur, who was bewildered at all this, "I have two words to say to the doctor; in the meantime, do you go into the room on the right, where you will see a large red pocket-book on a bureau; open it, and take out five notes of a thousand francs each, and bring them to me."

"And who are those five thousand francs for?" said the Chourineur, involuntarily.

"For the Schoolmaster: and you can, at the some time, have him brought in here."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PUNISHMENT.

The following scene took place in a brilliantly-lighted apartment, hung with red. Rodolph, attired in a long dressing-gown of black velvet, which added to the paleness of his countenance, was seated before a large table covered with a green cloth. On this table was the pocket-book of the Schoolmaster, the pinchbeck chain of the Chouette (to which was suspended the little *Saint Esprit* of lapis lazuli), the blood-stained stiletto with which Murphy had been stabbed, the iron instrument with which the door had been broken open, and the five notes of a thousand francs each, which the Chourineur had fetched from the next apartment.

The Negro doctor sat at one side of the table, and the Chourineur at the other. The Schoolmaster, securely bound with cords, and utterly unable to move, was placed in a large arm-chair on casters, in the middle of the room. Those who had brought this man in had retired, and Rodolph, the doctor, the Chourineur, and the assassin were alone present. Rodolph no longer exhibited any sign of irritation. About to discharge a solemn, self-imposed, and important duty, he was calm, sad, and collected. The doctor was pensive. The Chourineur felt a strange, vague fear: he could not withdraw his gaze from that of Rodolph. The Schoolmaster's countenance was ghastly from excessive fear. The most profound silence reigned within: nothing was heard but the noise of the rain without, as it fell from the roof on to the pavement with a dull, splashing sound. Rodolph addressed the Schoolmaster: "Escaped from the hulks at Rochefort, where you were condemned for life for forgery, robbery, and murder, you are Anselm Duresnel!"

"It is false!" said the Schoolmaster, in a broken voice, and throwing a wild, unquiet look about him.

"You are Anselm Duresnel, and you murdered and robbed a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy."

"It is false!"

"You will confess it by and by."

The assassin looked at Rodolph with surprise.

"This night you came here to commit a rob-

bery, and you have stabbed the master of this house ——"

"It was you who proposed the robbery!" said the Schoolmaster, recovering a portion of his assurance. "I was attacked, and I defended myself."

"The man whom you stabbed did not attack you—he was unarmed. It is true, I did propose this robbery to you—I will presently tell you why. Last night, after having robbed a man and woman in the City, you offered them your service to kill me for a thousand francs ——"

"I heard him!" said the Chourineur.

The Schoolmaster darted at him a glance of the most ferocious hatred.

Rodolph resumed: "You see you had no need of temptation from me to do mischief."

"You are not my judge, and I will not answer you again."

"Now I will tell you why I proposed this robbery to you. I knew you to be an escaped convict, and I knew you to be aware who are the parents of the unfortunate girl, all whose misfortunes and sufferings have been caused by your infamous accomplice the Chouette. I wished to bring you here by the attraction of a robbery, because this was the only temptation that could seduce you. Once in my power, I leave you the choice of being returned to the hands of justice, which will make you pay with your head for the assassination of the cattle-dealer ——"

"It is false! I did not commit that crime."

"Or of being escorted out of France, under my direction, and placed in perpetual confinement, where your lot will be less painful than at the hulks; but this relaxation of punishment shall only be allowed on condition that you give me the information which I desire. Condemned for life, you have escaped from your confinement; by seizing upon your person, and placing you hereafter beyond the possibility of doing mischief, I serve society; while by your confession I may, perhaps, be enabled to restore to her family a poor creature still more unfortunate than guilty. Such was my original intention—it was not legal: but both by your escape and your subsequent crimes, you have placed yourself beyond the pale of all law. Yesterday, by a providential revelation, I discovered that you are Anselm Duresnel ——"

"It is false! I am not called Duresnel."

Rodolph took from the table the chain of the Chouette, and pointing out to the Schoolmaster the little *Saint-Esprit* of lapis lazuli, said to him in a menacing and terrible voice: "Sacrilege! You have prostituted to an infamous wretch this holy relic—thrice holy, for your child received this pious gift from his mother and *her* mother!"

The Schoolmaster, stupefied by this discovery, dropped his head, and made no reply.

"You carried off your son from his mother fifteen years ago, and you alone possess the secret of his existence. I had in this act of atrocity a strong additional motive for laying hands on you when I had detected who you were, to say nothing of what you have done to me personally, and which I do not care to avenge. To-night you have again shed blood without provocation. The man whom you have assassinated came to you with confidence, not suspecting your sanguinary rage. He asked you what you wanted: 'Your money or your life!' and you stabbed him with your poniard."

"Such was the account given by Mr. Murphy, when I first came to his assistance," said the doctor.

"It's false! he lied!"

"Murphy never lies," said Rodolph, coldly. "Your crimes demand a signal reparation. You came forcibly into this garden—you stabbed a man that you might rob him: you have committed another murder—you ought to die here. Pity, respect for your wife and son, shall save you from the disgrace of the scaffold. It will be said that you were killed in consequence of an armed resistance to your attack. Prepare to die—the means for your punishment are prepared!"

The countenance of Rodolph was fixed and implacable. The Schoolmaster had noticed, stationed in an adjoining room, two men armed with carbines. His name too was known: he thought they were going to dispatch him privately, that his recent crimes might be buried in obscurity, and his family spared the new opprobrium. As is common with such people, this wretch was as cowardly as he was ferocious. Believing that his hour was come, he trembled, and cried: "Mercy!"

"There is no mercy for you," said Rodolph. "If your brains be not blown out here, the scaffold awaits you ——"

"I prefer the scaffold—I shall live, at least, two or three months longer. What consequence is it to you, as I should be sure to be punished at last? Mercy! mercy!"

"But your wife—your son; they bear your name ——"

"My name is dishonoured already. Let me live, if only for eight days. Oh! in mercy do!"

"Not even that contempt of life which is sometimes displayed by the greatest criminals!" said Rodolph, with disgust.

"Besides, the law forbids any one to take justice into his own hands," said the Schoolmaster, with assurance.

"The law!" exclaimed Rodolph, "the law! Do you dare to invoke the law? you, who have always lived in open revolt and armed against society?"

The ruffian bowed his head, and made no answer. At length he added, in a more humble tone: "At least then, for pity's sake, spare my life!"

"Will you tell me where your son is?"

"Yes, yes, I will tell you all I know about him."

"Will you tell me who are the parents of that young girl whose infancy was so tortured by the Chouette?"

"In my pocket-book you will find papers which will put you on the track of the persons who delivered her to the Chouette."

"Where is your son?"

"Will you let me live?"

"Confess all first."

"But then, when I have told you all ——" said the Schoolmaster, with an air of hesitation.

"You have killed him!"

"No, no! I have confided him to one of my accomplices, who, when I was arrested, succeeded in making his escape."

"What did he do with him?"

"He brought him up, and gave him the necessary education for taking a situation in a banking-house at Nantes, so that he might give us information, manage an introduction to the banker, and so facilitate our plans. Although at Rochefort, and waiting for an opportunity to effect my escape, I arranged this enterprise, and corresponded in cipher with my friend ——"

"Oh, my God! his child! his son!! This

man appals me!" cried Rodolph, with horror, and burying his head in his hands.

"But we intended nothing more than forgery," exclaimed the brigand; "and besides, when my son learned what was expected of him, he became indignant, told all to his employer, and quitted Nantes. You will find in my pocket-book proofs of all the steps taken to discover traces of him. The last house in which we ascertained he had lived, was in the Rue du Temple, where he was known under the name of François Germain: the exact address is also in my pocket-book. You see I have concealed nothing—I have told you all. Now keep your promise, and only cause me to be arrested for the burglary of this evening."

"And the cattle-dealer of Poissy?"

"It is impossible for that to be discovered—there are no proofs. I own it to *you*, in proof of my good faith, but before a judge I should deny all knowledge of the business."

"You do confess it, then?"

"I was in distress, and had not the means to live—the Chouette advised me to do it: now I repent of it, as you may see by my confession. Ah! if you will but be generous enough to save me from the hands of justice, I will give you my word of honour that I will commit no more crimes."

"You shall live, and I will not deliver you into the hands of the law."

"You will, then, pardon me?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, as though doubting what he heard; "you will forgive me!"

"I both judge you and award your punishment," cried Rodolph, in a solemn tone. "I will not surrender you to the law, because that could only condemn you to the hulks or the scaffold; which must not be. No, for many reasons. The galleys would but open a new field for the exercise of your herculean strength and villany, which would quickly be developed in domineering over that foul rabble, and thus gratify your brutal instincts, and render you a fresh object of horror or of dread—for even crime has its ambition, and you would rejoice in the monstrosity. The hulks! no, no; your iron frame would alike defy the labours of the oar or the chastisement of those placed over you. And the strongest chains may be broken, the thickest wall pierced through—steep ramparts scaled—and you might one day break forth, and be again let loose upon society, like an infuriated beast, marking your passage with rapine and bloodshed; for none would be safe from your great strength, or from the sharpness of your knife: therefore this must be avoided. But since the galleys might fail to stop your infamous career, how is society to be guaranteed from your brutal violence? Deliver you up to the executioner?"

"It is my death, then, that you seek!" cried the ruffian. "My death!"

"Your death? Do not hope that I intend so mild and speedy a termination to your just punishment. Abject wretch! in your eagerness to live, in your obstinate clinging to hope, you would not even believe that you were about to die; and, far from dwelling upon the scaffold and the block, your guilty soul would be filled with schemes of escape and hopes of pardon, till in the very grasp of the executioner; and even in that terrible moment, brutalised by terror, you would be a mere mass of human flesh, offered up by justice as a holocaust to the manes of your victims. This must not be; hope must be denied thee, monster that thou art! No, without repentance, I would not leave thee a shadow of a hope in this world."

"What then have I done to this man? who can he be, and whence comes he, to torture me thus? where am I?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in accents of wild terror.

Rodolph continued: "If, on the other hand, you had braved the scaffold—as one having the murderer's only redeeming quality, personal courage—equally little would it have availed with me to have given you up to the executioner. For you, the scaffold would be merely an ensanguined stage; where, like so many others, you would make a parade of your ferocity; where, reckless of a miserable life, you would exhale your last breath with a blasphemy! Neither would this suit my views. It is not good for the people to see the criminal cracking jokes with the executioner, breathing out in a sneer the divine spark which the Creator has breathed into us. There is something very sacred in the safety of a soul. All crime may be expiated and redeemed, says the Saviour; but to that end, sincere repentance is necessary. From the tribunal to the scaffold, the journey is too short; it would not do, therefore, for you to die thus."

The Schoolmaster was overwhelmed, crushed; for the first time in his life, he felt that there was something still more to be feared than death. This vague dread was horrible.

Rodolph continued: "Anselm Duresnel, for the reasons I have mentioned, you will not go to the hulks, and you will not be put to death."

"What, then, do you mean to do to me? Are you going to send me, still living, down to hell?"

"Listen!" said Rodolph, rising, and throwing a menacing authority into his gesture: "you have criminally abused your vast strength—I will paralyse that strength; the strongest have trembled before you—you shall tremble before the weakest. Assassin! you have plunged the creatures of God into eternal night—the shadows of night eternal shall commence for you even in this world. This night—in a few minutes—your punishment shall equal your offences. But," added Rodolph, in an accent of mournful pity, "the terrible judgment I am about to pronounce leaves you a boundless horizon of repentance; I should be as criminal as you, if, in punishing you, I merely gratified a vengeance, however just that vengeance might be. Far from being sterile, your punishment should be fruitful; far from damning you, it may—if you so will it—redeem you. If, in order to render you henceforth incapable of doing evil, I for ever deprive you of all the splendours of creation—if I plunge you into an impenetrable night, alone, with the memory of your many and mighty crimes, it is that you may unceasingly reflect upon their enormity. Yes! for ever isolated from the external world, you will be forced to look constantly within yourself; and then I hope that your brow, now bronzed by infamy, will blush for shame; and that your soul, now hardened by ferocity, corroded by crime, will be softened by others' commiseration, and by your own repentance. Each of your words, now a blasphemy, will then be a prayer; you are audacious and cruel, because you are strong—you will be mild and humble, because you will be weak. Your heart is closed against repentance—some day you will learn to weep for your victims. You have degraded the intelligence that God has endowed you with,

and reduced it to the mere instincts of rapine and plunder; from a man, you have become a mere wild beast; some day, your intelligence will be purified by remorse, reclaimed by expiation. You, more inhuman than the beast which perisheth, have trampled on the tender feelings by which even animals are actuated—you have been the destroyer of your partner and your offspring. After a long life, entirely devoted to the expiation of your crimes, you may venture to implore of the Almighty the great though unmerited happiness of obtaining the pardon of your wife and son, and dying in their presence."

As he uttered these last words, the voice of Rodolph trembled with emotion, and he was obliged to conclude.

The extreme terror of the Schoolmaster had subsided during this long discourse; he had yielded to the opinion that, after this, he was to be discharged, upon a promise of future amendment; and almost restored to his usual confidence and brutal audacity by the mild accents of Rodolph, the ruffian said, with a loud and vulgar laugh: "Ah, ha! unriddle us this riddle. Whereabouts are we in our catechism now?"

Instead of replying, Rodolph said to the doctor: "Proceed, David! And may the Almighty punish me if I do wrong!"

The Negro rang: two men entered. David made a sign towards a side-door, which opened into an adjoining closet, and they rolled in the chair in which the Schoolmaster remained bound, and incapable of the smallest movement.

"Are you going to murder me, then? Mercy! mercy!" cried the wretch, as he was being removed.

"Gag him!" cried the black, entering the closet.

Rodolph and the Chourineur were left alone.

"Mr. Rodolph," said the Chourineur, pale and trembling, "Mr. Rodolph, pray speak to me! I am frightened. I must be dreaming. What have they done to the Schoolmaster? He does not cry now—all is so silent, which alarms me the more!"

At this moment David came out of the cabinet; his countenance had that livid hue peculiar to negroes, while his lips were ashy pale.

The two men who had removed the Schoolmaster into the closet now replaced him, still bound in the chair, in Rodolph's presence.

"Remove the gag and unbind him!" exclaimed David.

There was a moment of fearful silence. Relieved of his bonds, the Schoolmaster sprung up, his hideous countenance expressing rage, horror, and alarm. He advanced one step with extended hands, then falling back into the chair he uttered a cry of unspeakable agony, and raising his hands towards the ceiling, exclaimed, with maddened fury: "Blind, by Heaven!"

"David, give him this pocket-book," said Rodolph.

The Negro placed in the trembling hands of the Schoolmaster, a small pocket-book, and said: "In this pocket-book there is money enough to provide you with a home and the means of subsistence for the rest of your life. You are now at liberty. Go, repent, and the Lord be merciful to you."

"Blind! blind!" repeated the Schoolmaster, mechanically grasping the pocket-book in his hand.

"Open the door; let him go!" said Rodolph; and the doors were loudly thrown open.

"Blind, blind, blind!" cried the brigand, in an increasing agony of tone.

"You are free—you have money—go!"

"But I—I cannot go! How would you have me go? I cannot see! Oh! it is a frightful crime, thus to abuse your strength, in order to—

"It is a crime to abuse one's strength," said Rodolph, in his most solemn tones. "And then, what hast thou done with thy strength?"

"Oh, death! Yes! I should have prefered death! cried the Schoolmaster. "To be at every one's mercy, to be afraid of everything! A mere child can beat me now! What, oh! what shall I do? My God! my God! what shall I do?"

"You have money."

"I shall be robbed."

"You will be robbed! Do you understand these words you pronounce with so much terror? Do you understand them—you, who have robbed so many? Go!"

"For the love of God," said the Schoolmaster, with a supplicating air, "let some one conduct me! What shall I do otherwise, in the streets? Ah! kill me! Kill, kill, I beg of you! For pity's sake, kill me!"

"No; some day you will repent."

"Never! I will never repent!" cried the Schoolmaster, in a paroxysm of rage. "Oh, I will avenge myself; yes, I will very terribly avenge myself!"

And gnashing his teeth, he sprang from the arm-chair, menacing the spectators with his clenched fists. At the very first step that he made, he stumbled.

"No, no, no," cried the unhappy wretch, now fully aware of his impotency; "I cannot move! And yet, I am so strong! Ah! I am much to be pitied, much; and yet no one cares for me!" And the mutilated and helpless savage wept like a beaten child.

It is impossible to express the affright and stupor of the Chourineur during this terrible scene; his rude and savage countenance expressed the deepest compassion. He now approached Rodolph, and said to him in a low tone: "Mr. Rodolph! this is no more than what he deserves; he is a notorious villain, no doubt. He also wanted to kill me a little while ago; but now he is blind, and weeping. Hold! Ten thousand thunders! This makes me feel quite ill. He does not know how to go away; he will probably get run over in the street. Is it your pleasure, that I lead him in safety to some place where he can at least be quiet?"

"Good!" said Rodolph, touched with this generosity, and warmly grasping the Chourineur's hand; "go with him my worthy fellow, go, by all means."

The Chourineur approached the Schoolmaster, and laid his hand upon his shoulder. The brigand shuddered.

"Who touches me?" he inquired, in a hollow voice.

"I!"

"Who, you?"

"The Chourineur."

"And you also are going to avenge yourself, are you not?"

"You are unable to go by yourself; take my arm; I will conduct you."

"You! you!"

"Yes; it pains me to see you—now. Let us go."

"Do you wish to lead me into some snare?"

"You well know that I am no coward. I will take no advantage of your misfortune. Come, let us go; it is daylight."

"It is daylight! Ah! I shall see daylight no more!" groaned the Schoolmaster.

Rodolph, no longer able to endure this scene, abruptly retired, followed by David, who dismissed the two attendants. The Chourineur and the Schoolmaster remained alone.

"Is it true that there is money in the pocket-book which they gave me?" asked the brigand, after a long silence.

"Yes; I myself put five thousand francs into it. With that sum you can place yourself as a boarder somewhere, in some corner of the country, for the remainder of your days; or would you prefer that I should conduct you to the ogress?"

"No, she would rob me."

"To Bras-Rouge?"

"He would poison me, to rob me the more securely."

"Whither, then, shall I take you?"

"I do not know. Fortunately, you are no thief, Chourineur; here, hide my pocket-book carefully in my waistcoat, so that La Chouette cannot see it, or she would strip me to the last sou."

"La Chouette? They have taken her to Beaujon Hospital. While I was struggling with you to-night, I deformed one of her legs."

"But what, then, is to become of me? My God, what *is* to become of me, with this black curtain continually before my eyes? Ah! and upon this black curtain I shall perhaps see the white and ghastly features of those ——"

A terrible shudder ran through that giant frame. After a moment of repose and silence, he said in a low and hollow tone: "The man whom I stabbed to-night, is he dead?"

"No."

"So much the better."

And again the brigand was silent for a few moments; then, suddenly stamping with rage, he exclaimed: "And yet, after all, it is you, Chourineur, who has caused me this evil. Brigand! but for thee, I should have made cold meat of the man, and carried away the money. If I am blind, too, that is your fault; yes, that is your fault."

"Do not think any more of that; it is not good for you to do so. Come, let us see—will you come or not? I am tired, I want to go to sleep. I have had enough of this, and to-morrow I shall return to my wood-hauling. First, I will lead you wherever you choose to go, and then, I'll be off to bed."

"But how can I tell you where to take me, when I do not know myself? To my lodging—— No, that will not do—I should ——"

"Well, just listen to me. Will you, for a day or two, come to my hovel? In a short time perhaps I can find out some decent people, who, not knowing whom you are, will take you in to board and lodge with them. And, now I think of it, I know a man at Port Saint Nicholas, whose mother lives at Saint Mandé, a worthy woman, who is not too prosperous; perhaps she may be willing to take charge of you. Will you come—yes or no?"

"One may trust you, Chourineur; I am not afraid to go with you—with my money. You have never stolen, you; you are not cruel, you are generous ——"

"And bore your taunts and jests, because I would not become a *prig*, like you."

"Ah! who could tell ——"

"If I had listened to you, I should now clean you out of all your *blunt*."

"That's true; but you have neither rancour nor hate," said the brigand, humiliated; "you are far, far superior to me."

"Thousand thunders! I believe all that; Mr. Rodolph has told me that I have heart and honour!"

"But who, then, is that man?" cried the Schoolmaster, in a voice of redoubled fury; "he is not a man; he is a wretch! a monster!"

The Chourineur shrugged his shoulders, and said: "Come, let us be off; are you ready?"

"We shall go to your home, shall we not, Chourineur?"

"Yes."

"You bear no malice on account of to-night? You will swear that to me, will you not?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that he is not dead, *that man!*"

"I am quite sure."

"That will be one the less to answer for. If they only knew——And the little old man of the Rue du Roule—and that woman of the Canal Saint Martin. Ah! now it is useless to think of all that. Blind, blind!" repeated the wretch, as, leaning on the Chourineur, he slowly left the house in the Allée des Veuves.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ISLE-ADAM.

A MONTH had now elapsed since the occurrence of the events of which we have spoken. We now beg to conduct the reader into the little village of Isle-Adam, situated in a delightful spot, on the bank of the River Oise, and at the foot of a forest.

In the country, the most trivial things become mighty events; so the elders of Isle-Adam, on the morning of which we now have to speak, occupied themselves very eagerly in endeavouring to find out the time at which they might expect the arrival of the purchaser of the most eligible premises for a butcher in that village, and which were opposite the church.

One of those idlers, more curious than the others, resolved to question the butcher lad, who, with an open and joyous countenance, and broad, strong shoulders, was actively engaged in making the final arrangements in the establishment.

The lad, questioned about his master, replied, that he did not as yet know him, he having purchased the business through an agent.

At this moment two persons, who had come from Paris, alighted from a cabriolet at the door of the shop. One of these men was Murphy, completely recovered from his wound; the other was the Chourineur.

At the risk of repeating a vulgarity, we will remark, that the prestige of dress is so powerful, that the guest of the foul cabarets of the city was scarcely recognisable under the respectable garments that he now wore. His physiognomy had undergone the same change; he had laid aside with his coarse rags, his savage, brutal, and turbulent air; and to see him walking with his two hands in the pockets of his long and warm great coat of dark broadcloth, one would have taken him for the most inoffensive, steady-going tradesman in the world.

"'Faith, my boy, the way was long, and the cold sharp; were they not?"

"To tell you the truth, I did not perceive it, Mr. Murphy: I am too happy, and joy heats me. And when I say happy, perhaps ——"

"What?"

"Yesterday you came to seek for me at the Port Saint Nicholas, where I was landing wood. I had not seen you since the night when the white-haired Negro blinded the Schoolmaster. Thunder! but that scene had a terrible effect upon me. And Mr. Rodolph, what a countenance!—he who generally looks so mild and gentle! I was quite frightened at that moment —"

"Well, and then?"

"You said to me: 'Good day, Chourineur.' 'Good day, Mr. Murphy,' said I. 'What, you are up and about again, then! So much the better, thunder!—so much the better. And Mr. Rodolph?' 'He was obliged to set out on a journey some days after the affair of the Allée des Veuves, and he forgot you, my man.' 'Well, Mr. Murphy,' I replied, 'I can only say that if Mr. Rodolph has forgotten me, why—it will give me pain ——' 'I meant to say, my good fellow, that he had forgotten to recompense your services, but that he should always remember them.' So, Mr. Murphy, those words made me jolly again directly. Thunder and lightning! I—I shall never forget him. He told me I had heart and honour—that's enough."

"Unfortunately, my lad, my lord left without giving any orders with regard to you. I, for my part, have nothing but what my lord gives me, and I am therefore unable to repay as I could wish, the service you have rendered to me personally."

"Come, come, Mr. Murphy, you are only joking now."

"But why the devil did you not come back again to the Allée des Veuves, after that fatal night? Then Monseigneur would not have left without thinking of you."

"Oh, ah; but Mr. Rodolph did not ask me, and I supposed that, perhaps, he had no further need of me."

"But you might have thought that he would, at all events, wish to give you some testimony of his gratitude."

"Since you have told me that Mr. Rodolph has not forgotten me, Mr. Murphy ——"

"Well, well, let us talk no more about it; only I may add, I have had a great deal of trouble to find you out. You do not now frequent the ogress's?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Oh, from some foolish notions I have got."

"Very well. But to return to what you were saying to me ——"

"To what, Mr. Murphy?"

"You said to me: 'I am glad that I have met with you, and the more so, perhaps ——' "

"Ah, now I have it, Mr. Murphy. Yesterday, as I was at work, you came to me and said: 'My lad, I am not rich, but at least I can obtain you a place in which you will have easier work than this, and you will earn four francs a-day.' 'Four francs a-day!' said I, 'the charter for ever!' I could hardly believe my own ears; why, it's the pay of an adjutant sub-officer. 'But,' I replied to you, 'that will suit me, Mr. Murphy.' 'But,' you then said, 'you must not look in such a beggarly state, or you will frighten the tradesman to whom I am going to take you.' I told you that I had no means of purchasing better attire, and then you said: 'Come with me to the Temple.' I followed you, and I chose the most spicy toggery at Mother Hubert's; you advanced me the means of paying for the things I had chosen, and in less than a quarter of an hour, I was as smart as a house proprietor or a dentist. Then you told me to meet you this morning at Saint Denis' Gate at daybreak; I found you waiting there in a cab; and here we are."

"Well, and what have you to regret in all this?"

"Why, you see, Mr. Murphy, to be well-dressed spoils me; and when I return to my master and my old dirty rags, it will have an effect upon me. And, then, to earn four francs a-day, after earning only two at the most, and to have such a rise all on a sudden—all this seems to me to be too good to be true, and to be quite impossible to last long; and I should prefer sleeping all my life upon the wretched straw bed in my loft, to sleeping for a few nights upon a good bed, and then having to return to my misery—that's my disposition."

"There is some sense in what you observe; but surely it would be still better always to sleep in a good bed?"

"That's clear; a bellyful of victuals is far better than dying of hunger. Ah! this is a butchery, here!" suddenly broke off the Chourineur, as he heard the lad sharpening his knives, and saw some quarters of beef through the curtains.

"Yes, my hearty—it belongs to a friend of mine; will you have a look over it, while our horse breathes?"

"My faith! this puts me in mind of my youth, only that the knacker's place at Montfaucon was my butchery, and poor worn-out hacks were my beasts. It is very strange; but if I had had the means, the trade I should have chosen would have been a butcher's. To go upon a nice nag to purchase one's beasts at the fairs and markets; return home, and warm oneself by one's own fireside if cold, or dry oneself if wet; with a fresh and jolly dame to receive you, and a lot of little young-un's to rummage all your pockets to see if you have not brought them something home: and then, in the morning, to take a bull by the horns, especially when he is at all vicious —name of names! nothing so good as his being vicious!—drag him to the ring, make him fast, knock him down, cut him up, dress up the joints handsomely — thousand thunders! that would have been as much to my taste as sucking barley-sugar was to that of poor La Goualeuse, when she was young. By the way, that poor girl, Mr. Murphy, not seeing her go to the ogress's any more, I have imagined that Mr. Rodolph has taken her away from that den. Ah, Mr. Murphy, that is a real good action. Poor girl! it was not by her own desire that she did wrong; she was so young; and then the habit. In fact, Mr. Rodolph has done a good action."

"I am of your opinion. But will you come and look over the shop, while the horse breathes?"

The Chourineur and Murphy went into the shop, then they went into the yard, where three magnificent oxen and some sheep were shut up, then to the cart-house, the horse-stable, the slaughter-house, and the lofts, and the other dependencies, all of which were so clean, and so carefully kept, as announced alike the orderly habits and the easy circumstances of the pro-

prietor. When they had seen all, excepting the upper story, Murphy said: "Well, don't you confess that my friend is an extremely fortunate fellow? This house and business belong to him, and he also has a thousand crowns of floating capital with which to conduct his business; add to all this, that he is only eight-and-thirty years of age, full of health, strong as a young bull, and fond of his business. The smart and honest lad, whom you just now saw in the shop, takes the place of his master, with great zeal and intelligence, when the latter is at fair or market; once more, don't you confess my friend to be a very fortunate and comfortable fellow?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Murphy; but what's to be said? There are some fortunate, and some unfortunate; when I am about to earn four francs a-day, and that there are thousands who work for half that pay, and even less ——"

"Will you go up and see the rest of the house?"

"With all my heart, Mr. Murphy."

"In fact, the person who is going to employ you is up-stairs."

"The person who is going to employ me?"

"Yes."

"But why did you not tell me that sooner?"

"I'll explain that to you by and by ——"

"Stop for one moment," said the Chourineur, with an air of embarrassment, and seizing Murphy by the arm, "hear me; I must tell you something which perhaps Mr. Rodolph may not have told you, but which I ought not to hide from the master who is to employ me; because, if it offends him, it's as well that he should know it now as hereafter."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—I mean to say——"

"Well?"

"That I have been a convict; that I have been at the hulks," said the Chourineur, in a low, broken voice.

"Ah!" said Murphy.

"But I never wronged any one," added the Chourineur; "and I would rather perish of hunger than rob: but I have done worse than thieve," he added, bowing his head: "I have killed a fellow-creature, but it was in anger. Still, that is not all," he continued, after a moment's silence. "I will tell everything to my employer. I would rather be refused at first than detected afterwards. You know him; if you think he will refuse me, spare me the mortification, and I will return as I came."

"No, no," said Murphy. "Come along, by all means."

The Chourineur followed Murphy, and they ascended the staircase; a door suddenly opened, and they were both in the presence of Rodolph.

"Leave us for a time, my good Murphy," said Rodolph.

CHAPTER XIX.

RECOMPENSE.

"The charter for ever! I am jolly glad to see you again, Mr. Rodolph, or, rather my lord!" said the Chourineur.

"Good day, my lad; trust me, I am no less pleased to see you again."

"What a joker Mr. Murphy must be, to say that you were gone away—but stay, my lord—"

"Call me Mr. Rodolph; I like that better."

"Well, then, Mr. Rodolph, forgive me for not having been to see you again, after that night when the Schoolmaster—I feel now that I have been unpolite; but you did not wish me to call, did you?"

"Oh, I forgive you," said Rodolph, smiling; and then he added: "Mr. Murphy has shown you over this house, has he not?"

"Yes, Mr. Rodolph. Ah! it's a handsome house, a handsome shop; everything is well arranged and comfortable. Talking about that, I shall be comfortable too, Mr. Rodolph—Mr. Murphy has got me employment at four francs a-day—yes, four francs!"

"I have something better than that to offer you, my lad."

"Better! Without wishing to contradict you, that is no such easy matter. Four francs a-day!"

"I tell you again, that I have something better than that to offer you; for this house, and all that it contains, this shop, and the thousand crowns that you will find in this pocket-book, all belong to you."

The Chourineur smiled with an air of stupefaction, flattened his long-napped hat between his knees, which he squeezed convulsively together, and did not understand the words of Rodolph, clear as they were.

Rodolph resumed, in a kind tone: "I conceive your surprise; but I repeat to you, that this house and this money are your own property."

The Chourineur turned purple, passed his bony hand across his perspiring brow, and murmured, in a broken voice: "Oh! that is to say—that is to say, my property!"

"Yes; your property — since I present you with it. Do you understand? I give it to you for yourself."

The Chourineur twisted about upon his chair, scratched his head, coughed, cast down his eyes, and made no reply; he felt the thread of his ideas escape from him; he perfectly heard all that Rodolph said to him, and that was precisely why he could not credit what he heard. Between the deep misery and degradation in which he had always lived, or, rather, vegetated, and the position assured to him by Rodolph, there was an abyss which it seemed impossible to fill up with such a service as he had already rendered to Rodolph.

"Then what I give you, seems to you to be beyond your hopes?" inquired Rodolph.

"My lord," said the Chourineur, hastily rising from his seat, "you offer me this house, and a large sum of money, to tempt me; but—I cannot take them. I never robbed in my life. It is perhaps to kill; but I have too often dreamed of the sergeant," he added, in a hoarse voice.

"Alas, the unfortunate!" exclaimed Rodolph, bitterly; "so rarely is compassion shown to them, that they can only understand liberality as the temptation and the reward of crime."

Then, addressing himself directly to the Chourineur, he said to him, in a tone of exquisite mildness: "You deceive yourself, and you do me injustice. I require nothing of you but what is honourable; what I give to you, I give because you have deserved it."

"*I!*" cried the Chourineur, whose depression and bashfulness began to return, "I merited it—and how?"

"I will tell you. Without a knowledge of good and evil, left to your savage instincts, confined for fifteen years at the hulks, amongst the most frightful ruffians, pressed by misery and hunger, forced by your disgrace and by the reprobation of honest men to frequent the resorts

of malefactors, not only did you remain honest, but remorse for your crime followed the expiation that was imposed upon you by human justice."

This simple and yet noble language, was a source of new wonder to the Chourineur, who gazed upon Rodolph with an expression of mingled respect and gratitude. But even yet he was not convinced.

"How, Mr. Rodolph," said he, "because you have beaten me, because I, fancying you a mere working-man like myself, because you speak slang like one who has learned it from the cradle, told you the history of my life over a couple of glasses of wine, and afterwards prevented you from being drowned—you—how?—in fact, I—a house—money—I an actual tradesman? Forgive me, Mr. Rodolph, but all this is really impossible!"

"Believing me like yourself, you told me the story of your life naturally, without pretence and without disguise, without hiding either what had been culpable or what had been generous. I judged you, and I judged well of you, and it pleased me to recompense you."

"But, Mr. Rodolph, this cannot be. No; there are many poor working-men who have been honest during their whole lives, and who ——"

"I know it, and perhaps I have done for many of them still more than I have done for you. But if the man who lives honestly in the society of honest men, who encourage him by their esteem, is deserving of their support, he who, notwithstanding the repulses of honest men, remains honest among the most abominable wretches upon the face of the earth, also merits interest and support. Moreover, that is not all. You have saved my life—you have also saved the life of that of Murphy, the dearest friend I have. What I do for you, therefore, is as much dictated by personal gratitude, as by the desire to save from pollution a kindly and noble nature, which has been perverted, but is not destroyed. Nor is that all."

"What else then, have I done, Mr. Rodolph?"

"I will tell you."

Rodolph cordially grasped the hand of the Chourineur, and said to him: "Full of commiseration for the misfortune of a man who had formerly wished to kill you, you offered him support and shelter; you even lodged him in safety in your own poor abode, near Notre Dame, No. 9."

"How, Mr. Rodolph! You know where I live!"

"If you forget the services you have rendered me, I do not. When you left my house, you were followed, and you were seen to enter there with the Schoolmaster."

"But Mr. Murphy told me that you did not know where I lived, Mr. Rodolph."

"I wished to subject you to one last trial—I wished to know if you added disinterestedness to generosity; and I found that, after your courageous action, you returned to your rude daily labour, asking nothing, hoping nothing, not uttering even a word of bitterness as to the apparent ingratitude with which your services were repaid; and when Murphy, yesterday, proposed to you employment a trifle better remunerated than that which you have been accustomed to, you accepted it with joy and gratitude."

"See you, Mr. Rodolph, as regards that, four francs a-day are four francs a-day; and as for the service I did to you, it is I rather who ought to be thankful."

"How is that?"

"Yes, yes," said the Chourineur, with a melancholy air, "for, since I have known you, and you said those words to me: 'You have a heart and you have honour,' it is astonishing how I have reflected. And it is a strange thing how two words, two mere words, can produce so much effect. But, in fact, sow two grains of wheat in the ground, and they will give you two great ears in due season."

This just and almost poetical comparison, struck Rodolph very forcibly. In fact, two words, but words of magic power for those who comprehend them, had almost instantaneously developed in that energetic nature the good and generous instincts of which it contained the germ.

"It was you who placed the Schoolmaster at Saint Mandé," said Rodolph.

"Yes, Mr. Rodolph. He got me to exchange his notes for gold, and to procure him a belt, which I sewed round him; into that belt we put his *shiners*, and then, happy go lucky! He boards at thirty sous per day, with some worthy people, to whom that sum is a little fortune. When I have time to leave my wood-piles, I shall go and see how he gets on."

"Your wood-piles! But you forget your house and shop, that are here at home!"

"See you, Mr. Rodolph, do not mock a poor devil any more; you have already *tried* me, as you term it, quite sufficiently. 'Your house,' and 'your shop,' are only variations of the same air. You have said to yourself: "Let us see if this animal, the Chourineur, will be vain peacock enough to suppose, that ——' Enough, Mr. Rodolph, you are a jocular fellow, but spare me the rest!" And he laughed, long, loud, and heartily.

"But, once more ——"

"If I were to believe that you would give me a fortune for nothing at all, you would surely say: 'Go, poor Chourineur, I feel for you; are you ill?'"

Rodolph now began to find himself puzzled how to convince the Chourineur; and he said to him, in an impressive and almost severe tone: "I never make a joke of the gratitude and interest with which noble conduct inspires me. As I have already said, this house and this money are yours, if they suit you, for the bargain is conditional. I swear to you, on my honour, that all this belongs to you, and that I give it to you solely for the reasons I have already mentioned."

At this firm and dignified accent, and the seriousness of Rodolph's countenance, the Chourineur's doubt was dispelled. For some moments he looked at him in silence; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, he said: "I believe you, my lord, and I heartily thank you. A poor man like myself cannot make fine speeches; but, once more, I most heartily thank you. All that I can promise is, that I will never refuse my aid to the unfortunate, because Hunger and Misery are ogresses of the same sort as those who seized upon La Goualeuse; and when once a poor devil is in the mire, it is not every one that has a fist strong enough to drag him out again."

"You could not better thank me, my lad; you perfectly understand me. You cannot give me stronger proof of your gratitude than in speaking to me thus."

"All the better, my lord, for I should be sorry if I gave you any other proof of it."

"Now, let us go and look over your establishment; my old Murphy has had that pleasure, and I also should like to have it."

Rodolph and the Chourineur went down stairs. Just as they got into the court-yard, the lad, respectfully addressing the Chourineur, said to him: "As you are my master, sir, I come to tell you that customers are waiting. We have no chops or legs, and we must kill a sheep or two directly."

"Parbleu!" said Rodolph to the Chourineur, "here is a fine opportunity to essay your talent; I should like to give you handsel; the fresh air has given me an appetite, and I will taste your chops."

"You are very good, Mr. Rodolph," said the Chourineur, joyfully; you flatter me; I will do my best."

"Shall I take two sheep to the slaughter-house, master?" said the lad.

"Yes, and bring a good sharp knife; let it have a very fine edge, and a thick back."

"I have just the thing for you, master; be easy—one that you might shave with. There——"

"Thousand thunders! Mr. Rodolph," said the Chourineur, throwing off his coat, and turning up the shirt-sleeves from his athletic arms, "this puts me in mind of my youth and the slaughter-house. You shall see how I'll go to work. Name of names! how I long to be at it! Thy knife, lad! thy knife! thy knife! Ah, that's the tool; I see you know your trade. Here's a blade! Blood of me! I'd cut up a mad bull with such a blade as this."

And the Chourineur brandished his knife. His eyes began to be blood-shotten; the wild beast was getting the upper hand of his better nature; the sanguinary instinct and appetite began to prevail in all their frightful energy.

The slaughter-house was in the court-yard; it was a vaulted room, faintly lighted by a narrow opening at the top.

The lad brought a sheep to the door, and said: "Shall I tie it to the ring, master?"

"Tie it! thousand thunders! and I with these knees! Be quiet; I'll fix him between my legs as if he were in a vice. Give me the beast, and you go and mind the shop."

The lad went away. Rodolph remained, and watched the Chourineur with an attention almost amounting to agony.

"Now then, to business," said he.

"Ah! and quickly too, my lord; you shall soon see how I can handle a knife! My hands burn! my eyes seem bursting! my temples beat as when I *see red!* Come hither; eh, *Madelon!* I shall stick you to death!"

And his eyes flashed with a wild brightness; and, no longer perceiving the presence of Rodolph, he lifted up the sheep without apparent effort, and with ferocious joy rushed with it into the slaughter-house. He might have been taken for a wolf leaping into his cave with his helpless prey.

Rodolph followed him, and leaned against one of the jambs of the door, which he shut. The slaughter-house was dark, but a bright ray of light falling directly down, illumined *à la Rembrandt* the rude countenance of the Chourineur, with his fair hair and red whiskers. Bent double, and holding the long gleaming knife in his teeth, he grasped the sheep between his knees. When he had placed it thus, he held back its head, and cut its throat.

At the moment when the sheep felt the knife, it made a low, plaintive cry, and turned its dying gaze upon the Chourineur, upon whose face the blood gushed forth from the gaping wound.

The look, the cry, the blood, caused the man a frightful impression. His knife fell from his hands; his countenance became livid, contracted, and frightful; his eyes rolled and dilated, his hair stood on end, and, recoiling from his victim, he exclaimed: "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

Rodolph ran to him, and said: "Be yourself, my lad."

"There he is! there! there's the sergeant!" exclaimed the Chourineur, still recoiling, staring with fixed and haggard eye, and pointing with his finger at the invisible phantom. Then, uttering a frightful cry, as if the spectre had touched him, he rushed into the darkest corner of the slaughter-house, and there, pressing his breast, face, and arms against the wall, as if to shut out the horrible vision, he continued, in a hollow and agonised voice, to repeat: "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEPARTURE.

THANKS to the attentions of Rodolph and Murphy, who had great difficulty in calming his agitation, the Chourineur, after a long crisis, was completely restored to himself. He was now alone with Rodolph, in an upper room of the house.

"My lord," said he, with an air of depression, "you have been very kind to me; but, see you, I would prefer being a thousand times more wretched than I have ever been, to following that business you are so kind as to offer me."

"Yet, you had better reflect; perhaps——"

"Ah, my lord, when I heard the cry of that poor beast, that did not defend itself—when I felt its blood spurt upon my face—the hot, life-like blood—oh! you know not what that is! Then I dreamt again my dream of the sergeant and those poor young fellows whom I stabbed, and who did not defend themselves; and who, in dying, looked at me with such a sad, mild air, as though they pitied me. Oh, my lord! it would drive me mad!" And the poor man buried his face in his hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"Come, come," said Rodolph, "calm yourself."

"Excuse me, my lord; but just now the sight of blood—of a knife—I could not bear it. At every instant that would call up those dreams which I was beginning to forget. To have one's hands or feet in blood daily—to cut the throats of poor animals that do not defend themselves—oh! no, no! I cannot do it! I would rather be blind like the Schoolmaster, than follow such a business."

It is impossible to describe the energy of the Chourineur's action, and the expression of his countenance, as he spoke thus. Rodolph felt himself deeply moved; he was satisfied with the horrible impression which the sight of blood made upon his *protégé*. For an instant, the wild beast—the sanguinary instinct, had triumphed over the man in the heart of the Chourineur; but remorse had speedily vanquished instinct. This was grand; it was a fine lesson.

"Pardon me, my lord," resumed the Chourineur, timidly; "I but ill repay your kindness to me; but——"

"Listen, my good fellow: I told you our bargain was conditional. I chose the business of a butcher for you, because I thought your tastes

and your instinct would make it agreeable to you."

"Alas! my lord, that is true; but for what you know of, that trade would be my delight; I was saying so to Mr. Murphy."

"Well, thinking it just possible that your inclination might not tend that way, I have made another arrangement for you—one upon which I have acted with the certainty of your approval. A person who possesses vast property in Algiers has made over to me for you—or at least, nothing remains but the mere signing of the papers—a vast grazing-farm. The lands attached to it are extremely fertile, and in full cultivation; but I must not conceal from you that, knowing your courage and your want of exercising it, I have acquired the farm conditionally, although it is situated at the farthest extremity of the Atlas—that is to say, at the advanced posts—and consequently subject to frequent attacks of the Arabs. There, it is necessary to be at least as much soldier as farmer; it is at once a fort and a farm. The man who has charge of the house, during the absence of the owner, will make you acquainted with all; he is, I learn, an honest and faithful man, and you will keep him with you as long as you need his services. Once established there, not only can you make your own fortune by labour and intelligence, but also render real service to the country by your courage. The colonists are forming themselves into a militia; the extent of your property, and the number of your dependents, will render you the chief of a large armed force, which will be electrified by your courage, and which will be of exceeding utility to protect the property of the farmers scattered over the vast plain. I repeat to you, that I have chosen this place in spite of the danger, or rather because of the danger, as I wish to utilise your natural intrepidity—because, in expiating a great crime, your re-establishment in virtue and character will be more noble, more heroic, more perfect, if achieved amidst the perils of an unconquered land, than in the midst of the peaceful inhabitants of a village in the country of your birth. If I did not offer you this position at the outset, it was because it was more than probable that the other would satisfy you; and this, moreover, is so adventurous, that I would not offer it to you without giving you a choice. There is still time; if this establishment does not suit you, say so frankly, and we will seek some other. If it does suit you, everything will be signed to-morrow; I will hand you over the title-deeds of the property, and you will at once proceed to Algiers with a person appointed by the present proprietor to show you the farm, and put you in full possession of the property. Two years of rent will be due, and paid to you on your arrival. The land brings three thousand francs; work, improve, be active, vigilant, and industrious, and you will easily and rapidly increase your property and promote your own fortune and that of the colonists, whom you will be in a position to assist; for I have no doubt that you will always be charitable, and remember that to be rich is to give much. Although you will be so far off, I shall not lose sight of you, and I shall never forget that I and my best friend owe our lives to you. The only proof of gratitude and attachment that I ask of you is, that you will as soon as possible learn to read and write sufficiently to furnish me with a regular weekly account of your doings; and to apply directly to me, should you want either advice or assistance."

It would be useless to endeavour to describe the transports of the Chourineur. His character and instincts are sufficiently well known to the reader, to give him to understand that no proposal could be more to his satisfaction.

Next day, the necessary arrangements were completed, and the Chourineur set out for Algiers.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESEARCHES.

The house which Rodolph possessed in the Allée des Veuves, was not his ordinary place of residence. He inhabited one of the largest hotels of the Faubourg Saint Germain, situated at the end of the Rue de Plumet, and the Boulevard des Invalides.

To avoid the honours due to his sovereign rank, the prince had preserved his incognito ever since his arrival in Paris, his *chargé d'affaires* having announced to the French government that his master would pay those visits which were absolutely indispensable, under the title of the *Comte de Duren*. Thanks to this common custom of the courts of the North, a prince travels with equal pleasure and freedom, and escapes all the weariness attendant upon annoying and confining forms. Notwithstanding his transparent incognito, Rodolph lived in a stately and gorgeous style. We now introduce our readers to his hotel in the Rue de Plumet—the time being the morning after the departure of the Chourineur for Algiers.

Ten o'clock had just struck. In a large room situated on the ground-floor, and next to the study of Rodolph, Murphy was seated before a bureau, engaged in sealing numerous letters and dispatches. An usher, dressed in black and wearing a silver chain round his neck, threw open the folding doors of the room, and announced: "His Excellency the Baron de Graün."

Murphy, without interrupting himself in his occupation, saluted the baron with a gesture at once familiar and cordial, and said, smiling: "Monsieur the Charge d'Affaires, will you warm yourself? I will be at your service in an instant."

"Mr. Private Secretary, I wait your orders," said, gaily, Mr. de Graün, as he made a very profound but very cordial bow to the worthy squire.

The baron was about fifty years of age; his hair was grey, scanty, and slightly powdered; his chin, somewhat prominent, was half hidden by a high cravat of very thick muslin, and of a most dazzling whiteness; his physiognomy was full of shrewdness, and his figure of distinction, and from beneath the glasses of his gold spectacles gleamed a look equally satirical and penetrating. Although it was ten o'clock in the morning, Mr. de Graün wore a black coat—etiquette required that he should do so; a ribband striped with several brilliant colours was in his button-hole. He placed his hat upon a chair, and drew up to the fire-place, while Murphy continued his work.

"His highness has doubtless been up part of the night, my dear Murphy, for your correspondence appears to me to be very considerable."

"Monseigneur," replied Murphy, "went to bed at about six o'clock this morning. Among other letters, he wrote one of eight pages to the Grand Marshal, and he dictated to me an equally long one to the chief of the Supreme Council,

the Prince d'Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal, his royal highness's cousin."

"You know that his son, Prince Henry, has entered as lieutenant in the guards in the service of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria?"

"Yes; Monseigneur recommended him most warmly as his relation. He is a fine, brave young fellow, with the figure of an angel, and as good as gold."

"The fact is, my dear Murphy, that if the young Prince Henry had had his *entrée* in the grand ducal abbey of Sainte Hermenegilde, of which his aunt is the superior, the poor nuns—"

"Ah! baron, baron ——"

"Well, well, the air of Paris—but let us talk seriously. Shall I need to wait the rising of his highness to give the information of which I am the bearer?"

"Oh, no, my dear baron; monseigneur has ordered that he be not awakened till two or three in the afternoon; he wishes you to send off these dispatches by a special courier this morning, instead of waiting until Monday: you will confide to me the information you have received, and I will repeat it to monseigneur when he rises. Such are his orders."

"Well, I believe his highness will be satisfied with what I have to tell him. But, my dear Murphy, I hope that the sending off of this courier is not an evil augury? The last dispatches that I had the honour to transmit to his highness ——"

"Announced that everything was going on admirably *yonder;* and it is precisely because monseigneur wishes to express, at the earliest possible moment, his satisfaction, that he desires you to expedite, on this very day, the dispatches of the chief of the Supreme Council, Prince d'Herkaüsen."

"There I recognise his highness. If there were a reprimand to send, he would be in no such haste."

"And nothing new here, my dear baron? Has nothing been noised about? Our mysterious adventures ——"

"Are completely unknown. Since the arrival of monseigneur in Paris, he has made a practice of shewing himself but little among the few persons to whom he has been presented; it is therefore supposed that he is extremely fond of privacy, that he makes frequent excursions in the neighbourhood of Paris, and, with the exception of the Countess Sarah Macgregor and her brother, no one is aware of the disguises assumed by his royal highness; and neither of the personages I have mentioned have the smallest interest in betraying the secret."

"Ah, my dear baron!" said Murphy, sighing, "what a pity that this cursed countess is now a widow."

"Was she not married in 1827, or in 1828?"

"In 1827, a short time after the death of that unfortunate little girl, who would now be sixteen or seventeen years old, and whose loss monseigneur daily weeps for, yet never mentions."

"Regrets the more conceivable, since his royal highness has no children from his marriage."

"And thus, my dear baron, we may account for the deep interest his royal highness takes in the poor Goualeuse, arising as it does from the fact that the daughter so deeply deplored would, had she lived, have been of the same age as this unfortunate girl."

"It is really melancholy that the Countess Sarah, from whom one might have supposed oneself delivered for ever, should find herself a widow precisely eighteen months after his highness has lost the pattern of wives, after years of wedded happiness. The countess, I am quite convinced, thinks herself especially favoured by fate in the occurrence of the double widowhood."

"And her insensate hopes, no doubt, have sprung up more ardent than ever; yet, she well knows that my lord has the deepest and most fully merited aversion to her. Did she not cause —— Ah, baron!" said Murphy, leaving the sentence unfinished, "that woman is an absolute calamity. God send, that she draw down no more misfortunes upon us!"

"But the views of the Countess Sarah, at the present time, are absurd; the death of the poor little girl of whom you spoke just now, snapped the last tie which could attach my lord to that woman; she is a mere fool if she persist in her hopes ——"

"Yes; but she is a desperate and a dangerous fool. Her brother, as you know, partakes in her ambitious and obstinate ideas, although that worthy couple have fully as much reason to despair now, as they had to hope—eighteen years ago."

"Ah! what misery has not been caused by the criminal complaisance of that infernal priest, Polidori!"

"Speaking of that wretch, I have heard that he was here within a year or two, plunged, no doubt, in the deepest misery, or else subsisting by the basest practices."

"What a fall, what degradation for a man of so much wit, learning, and talent!"

"But the innate perversity of his character marred these qualities. Heaven grant that he may not meet the countess! The union of those two evil spirits would be dangerous indeed."

"Now, respecting the facts you have been collecting, have you them about you?"

"Here is my information," said the baron, taking a paper from his pocket. "This relates to the researches made concerning the birth of the young girl known as La Goualeuse, and concerning the present place of abode of an individual known by the name of François Germain, the son of the Schoolmaster."

"Will you read your notes to me, my dear De Graün? I know the intentions of monseigneur, and I shall soon see whether your intelligence is sufficient. You are still satisfied with your agent?"

"He is a very precious man; full of intelligence, address, and discretion. I am even sometimes obliged to moderate his zeal; for, as you are aware, his highness has reserved certain points for his own clearing up."

"And your agent is still unaware of the part that his royal highness takes in all this?"

"Absolutely. My diplomatic situation furnishes an excellent pretext for the investigations with which I charge him; and Mr. Badinot (for such is the name of the person of whom I am speaking) has many go-betweens and open or concealed connections in almost every class and pursuit. Formerly an attorney, and compelled to quit his profession in consequence of a grave abuse of confidence, he has, nevertheless, preserved the most exact ideas of the fortune and position of his former clients; he is acquainted with many secrets, of which he unblushingly boasts of having made a profit. Two or three

times enriched in business, and become poor again just as often—too well, or rather too ill known, to be able to enter into any new speculations—reduced to living from day to day, by means more or less illegal—he is a sort of Figaro, to whose conversation it is not a little curious to listen. As long as his interest commands it, he belongs soul and body to whomsoever pays him; he has nothing to gain by deceiving us; moreover, I have a strict watch constantly kept over him, without his knowing it. Altogether, then, we have no reason to suspect him."

"The particulars we have as yet got from him have been found to be sufficiently exact."

"He has a certain honesty about his method of doing business; and I assure you, my dear Murphy, that Mr. Badinot is the very original type of one of those mysterious existences which are only to be met with—nay, which can only exist—in Paris. He would greatly amuse his highness, only that it is necessary that they should not be known to each other."

"You can increase the pay of Mr. Badinot, if you think it necessary."

"Five hundred francs per month, and what he overcharges in the way of expenses—which amounts to nearly as much more—appear to me quite sufficient. He seems to be quite content; at all events, we can see to that by and by."

"And he is not ashamed of the sort of business in which he is concerned?"

"He! on the contrary, he glorifies himself not a little upon it: when he brings me his reports, he invariably does so with a most important air—I may almost say, with a diplomatic fuss; for the fellow actually pretends to suppose that what he is engaged in has some connection with state affairs, and to wonder at the secret connection which may exist between the destinies of empires and interests the most contrary. Yes! he actually has the impudence to say to me sometimes: 'What complications, unknown to the vulgar, there are in the government of a state! Who would suppose now, M. le Baron, that the notes I bring to you have, however, their part in the course of the affairs of Europe!'"

"Oh, yes! knaves try to deceive themselves as to their own baseness; it is the homage which they pay to honest men. But these notes, my dear baron?"

"Here they are, almost entirely drawn up after the report furnished by Mr. Badinot."

"I listen to you."

Mr. de Graün then read as follows:—

"*Note relative to Fleur-de-Marie.*—About the beginning of the year 1827, a man called Peter Tournemine, then under sentence at the hulks at Rochefort, for the crime of forgery, proposed to a woman, named Gervaise, but more commonly called La Chouette, to take the perpetual charge of a little girl of six or seven years old, for the sum of one thousand francs, which was to be paid down.

"The bargain being concluded, the child was delivered over to the woman, with whom she remained two years: at the end of which time, unable to endure the ill-treatment to which she was exposed, the young girl disappeared, and La Chouette had heard no more of her for some years, when she again saw her about six weeks ago, in a cabaret in the city; the child had now become a young woman, and bore the name of La Goualeuse.

"A few days before this meeting, the man named Tournemine, whom the Schoolmaster knew at the hulks at Rochefort, remitted to Bras Rouge (a secret and habitual correspondent of convicts and of thieves who are still at liberty) a letter, detailing certain particulars concerning the child formerly entrusted to the woman Gervaise, otherwise La Chouette.

"From this letter, and from the declarations of La Chouette herself, it results that a certain Madame Seraphin, the housekeeper to a notary named Jacques Ferrand, commissioned Tournemine, in 1827, to find out some woman, who, for the sum of one thousand francs, would consent to take charge, altogether and permanently, of a child as above mentioned. La Chouette accepted the offer.

"The object of Tournemine, in addressing this information to Bras Rouge, was, to enable him, through some third party, to extort money from Madame Seraphin, by threatening her to make the affair public; Tournemine affirming, that Madame Seraphin was, in fact, only acting under the orders of some unknown personages.

"Bras Rouge had confided this letter to La Chouette, some time associated in the crimes of the Schoolmaster, which at once accounts for this information being in the possession of the brigand, and for the words of La Chouette to La Goualeuse, when she met and wished to torment her: 'We have found out all about your parents, but you shall never know who or what they are.'

"The point to be decided was, as to the truth of the circumstances detailed by Tournemine in his letter to the Chouette.

"It has been ascertained that Madame Seraphin and the notary are both living. The address of the latter is Rue du Sentier, No. 41. He passes for being austere and pious—at least, he much frequents the churches; in his professional duties, he is so strict as to be accused of harshness; he has an excellent business, and lives with an economy bordering upon avarice: Madame Seraphin is still his housekeeper. Mr. Jacques Ferrand, formerly very poor, has purchased his place for three hundred and fifty thousand francs; the greater part of which money was furnished to him by Mr. Charles Robert, a superior officer of the staff of the National Guard of Paris, an extremely handsome young man, who is very fashionable and popular in certain company. He shares with the notary in the profits of the practice of the latter, which is estimated at about fifty thousand francs per annum—but, of course, our handsome officer has nothing to do with the business of the office. Some evil speakers affirm that, in consequence of certain lucky hits upon the Stock Exchange, entered into in concert with Mr. Charles Robert, the notary must at present be in a situation to repay the original loan. But the reputation of Mr. Jacques Ferrand is so well established, that these reports are pretty unanimously set down as horrible calumnies. It seems, then, to be pretty certain, that the housekeeper of this holy man, Madame Seraphin, must be able to throw an entire light upon the birth of La Goualeuse."

"Excellent, my dear baron!" said Murphy, "there is much appearance of reality in the declarations of this same Tournemine. Perhaps we may obtain, from this notary's housekeeper, some means of discovering the family of that unfortunate girl, La Goualeuse. Now, have you equally good information about the son of the Schoolmaster?"

"Less precise, perhaps—but still very satisfactory."

"Truly! your Mr. Badinot is quite a treasure."

"You see that Bras Rouge is the working tool of all this. Mr. Badinot, who should have some connection with the police, had already pointed him out to us as being the go-between of many convicts, since the first steps taken for the discovery of the son of Madame Georges Duresnel, the unfortunate wife of that monster the Schoolmaster."

"No doubt; and it was while seeking Bras Rouge, in that dirty den in the City, No. 13, Rue aux Fêves, that my lord met with the Chourineur and La Goualeuse. His highness was absolutely determined, by this opportunity, to visit those horrible haunts, thinking that he might, perhaps, find there some unfortunates to save. His benevolent anticipations have been fulfilled; but at the price of what dangers, it is painful to think on!"

"Dangers, my dear Murphy, which you have bravely shared."

"Am I not, for that especial purpose, his highness's *charcoal-man in ordinary?*" replied Murphy, with a smile.

"Rather say, his brave body-guard, my worthy friend. But, to speak of your courage and devotion, is to talk of what every one knows. Let us, then, return to my report. Here is the whole concerning François Germain, son of Madame Georges and the Schoolmaster, otherwise called Duresnel:—

"It is about eighteen months ago, that a young man, named François Germain, arrived in Paris, from Nantes, where he had been employed in the banking-house of Noel and Co.

"It seems, from the confessions of the Schoolmaster, and from many letters that were found upon him, that the wretch to whom he had entrusted his son, that he might be trained to evil doing, and in the end made a profitable tool in criminality, unveiled the horrible scheme to the young man, by proposing to him to aid an attempt at robbery and forgery upon the house of Noel and Co., in which François Germain was employed. The young man repelled the proposal with indignation; but, being unwilling to denounce the man who had reared him, he wrote an anonymous letter to his employers, in which letter he instructed them as to the designs projected against the bank, and then secretly quitted Nantes, that he might permanently escape from the power of those who wished to render him the tool and the accomplice of their crimes.

"Those wretches, learning the departure of François Germain, came to Paris, and leagued with Bras Rouge in pursuit of the son of the Schoolmaster; no doubt, with the most sinister intentions against the young man, on account of his being acquainted with their criminal projects. After long and numerous researches, they succeeded in discovering his address; but it was too late, François Germain having some days previously left his lodging, suddenly, in consequence of seeing the man who had first sought to corrupt him, and from guessing upon what errand that man had now come to Paris. Thus, the son of the Schoolmaster once more escaped from his persecutors.

"Still, however, following up the scent, they discovered, about six weeks since, that he resided at No. 17, Rue du Temple; and he nearly fell into an ambush laid for him as he returned home one evening—a circumstance which the Schoolmaster never named to my lord.

"Germain accurately guessed at the quarter from which the attempt proceeded, and again he suddenly and secretly changed his place of abode; and his persecutors were still ignorant of it, at the moment when the Schoolmaster was punished for his crimes; and it was at this point of the affair that researches were commenced by order of my lord, of which the following is the result:—

"François Germain, for about three months, lived at No. 17, Rue du Temple; a house which is not a little remarkable for the manners and pursuits of most of the people who live there. Germain was a great favourite among them, by reason of his gay, frank, and obliging character. Although he appeared to live upon a very moderate income, or salary, yet he had rendered the most generous assistance to a poor family who occupied the garrets of this house. Enquiries have vainly been made in the Rue du Temple, as to the new abode of François Germain, and as to the business or profession followed by him; but it was supposed that he was employed in some office or house of business, as he left home in the morning and returned about ten o'clock at night. The only person who precisely knows the residence of the young man, is a lodger in the house No. 17, Rue du Temple, a young girl, who appeared to be *very intimately* connected with Germain. She is an extremely pretty grisette, named Mademoiselle Rigolette. She occupies a room next to that in which Germain had lodged. That room, vacant since Germain's departure, is still to let, and it is on the pretext of hiring it, that ulterior information may be obtained."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Murphy, after some moments of deep reflection; "Rigolette! I know that name somewhere."

"How! Sir Walter Murphy!" returned the baron, laughing. "How! do you, the worthy and respectable father of a family, know such people as grisettes? What! the name of this Mademoiselle Rigolette is not new to you? Oh, fie! fie!"

"'Pon my honour, my lord has put me in the way of making some strange acquaintances, so you need not be so much astonished at that. But wait a bit. Yes, now I recollect it perfectly; my lord, in telling me the story of La Goualeuse, could hot avoid laughing at the very odd name of Rigolette, and, as well as I can recollect, it was the name of a prison companion of that poor Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well," returned the baron, "just now Mademoiselle Rigolette can be of exceeding service to us. But I will finish my report:"—

"Perhaps some benefit might arise from hiring a room at No. 17, Rue du Temple. There were no orders to push the investigation any further, but, from some words which dropped from the portress, there is full room to believe, that not only would it be possible to find in this house certain clues for the discovery of the Schoolmaster's son, through the means of Mademoiselle Rigolette, but the house itself would afford my lord an opportunity of studying human nature amid wants, difficulties, and misery, the very existence of which he is far from suspecting."

"Thus you see, my dear Murphy," said Mr. de Graün, finishing his report and presenting it to the squire—"you see that it is from the notary, Jacques Ferrand, we must expect to obtain information as to the parents of La Goualeuse, and that we must go to Mademoiselle Rigolette to trace the present abode of François Germain. It seems to me a great thing to have ascertained the direction in which to search."

"Undoubtedly, baron. My lord, moreover, I am sure, will find ample means for observation in the house of which you speak. But I have a word more to say so you. Have you gained any tidings respecting the Marquis d'Harville?"

"Yes; and so far as money matters are concerned, the fears of his royal highness are wholly unfounded. Mr. Badinot affirms (and he is very likely to be well informed on the subject) that the fortune of the marquis has never been in a more satisfactory condition, or better administered."

"After having in vain endeavoured to discover every other cause of the deep and secret grief which preys upon Mr. d'Harville, my lord imagined that perhaps the marquis had some pecuniary difficulties; if it had been so, he would have removed them in that mysteriously delicate manner which you know he adopts to veil his generosity. But since there is no foundation for this conjecture, he must abandon all hope of guessing the enigma, which he will do the more reluctantly on account of his ardent friendship for Mr. d'Harville."

"His royal highness retains a lively recollection of the highly important services rendered to his own father by the father of the marquis. Are you aware, my dear Murphy that at the remodelling of the States, in 1815, at the Germanic Confederation, the father of his royal highness was near being excluded, from his well-known attachment to Napoleon? Thanks to the friendship with which the Emperor Alexander honoured him, the deceased Marquis d'Harville was enabled to render the greatest service to the father of our patron. The emperor, whose warm regard for the late marquis had taken its date from the period of that nobleman's emigration to Russia, exerted his powerful influence in congress so successfully, that at the grand meeting to decide the destinies of the princes of Germany, the father of our noble employer was reinstated in all his original rights. As for the friendship now subsisting between the present marquis and his royal highness, I believe it commenced when, as mere boys, they met together on a visit paid by the then reigning Grand Duke to the late Marquis d'Harville."

"Yes; and this friendship of their boyish days seems to have increased with their years. Nor is this all. So profound is his highness's gratitude for the services rendered to his father, that all bearing the honoured name of d'Harville, or belonging to the family, possess a powerful claim on the kindness of the prince. Thus, not alone to her virtues or her misfortunes, does poor Madame Georges owe the increasing and unwearied goodness of my lord."

"Madame Georges! the wife of Duresnel, the felon known as the Schoolmaster?" exclaimed the baron.

"Yes, the mother of François Germain, the youth we are seeking, and whom, I trust, we shall find."

"She is the relation of Mr. d'Harville?"

"She was his mother's cousin, and her most intimate friend: the old marquis entertained for Madame Georges, the most perfect friendship and esteem."

"But how came it, that the d'Harville family permitted a descendant of theirs to marry such a monster as this Duresnel?"

"The father of this unfortunate woman was a Mr. de Lagny, who, previous to the Revolution, possessed considerable property in Languedoc, and who, having escaped the proscription, availed himself of the first tranquillity which succeeded this terrible epoch, to establish his only daughter in marriage. Among the various candidates for the hand of the young heiress was this Duresnel, the representative of a wealthy and respectable family, possessing powerful parliamentary influence. Concealing the depravity of his disposition beneath the most specious exterior, to this man was Mademoiselle de Lagny united, by desire of her father; but a very short time sufficed to strip the mask from his character, and to display his natural propensities. A gambler, spendthrift, and profligate, addicted to the lowest vices that can disgrace a human being, he soon dissipated, not only his own fortune, but also that of his wife. Even the estate to which Madame Georges Duresnel had retired, was involved in the general ruin occasioned by her husband's passion for play, and his dissolute mode of life; indeed the unfortunate woman would have been left without a shelter for herself or infant son, but for the kind affection of her relation, the Marquise d'Harville, whom she loved with the tenderness of a sister. With this valued friend Madame Duresnel found a welcome home, while her wretched husband, finding himself utterly ruined, plunged into the blackest crimes, and stopped at no means, however guilty and desperate, to supply his pleasures. He became the associate of thieves, murderers, pickpockets, and forgers, and ere long, falling into the hands of the law, was sentenced to the galleys for the term of his natural life. Yet, while suffering the just punishment of his crimes, his base mind devised the double atrocity of tearing the child from its miserable mother, for the sake of breaking down every good principle it might have imbibed, and of training it up in vicious readiness to join his future schemes of villany. You know the rest. After the condemnation of her husband, Madame Georges, without assigning any reason for so doing, quitted the Marquise d'Harville, and went to hide her shame and her sorrows in Paris, where she soon fell into a state of frightful destitution. It would occupy too much time to tell you by what train of events my lord became aware of the misfortunes of this excellent woman, as well as the ties which connect her with the D'Harville family: it is sufficient that he came most opportunely and generously to her assistance, induced her to quit Paris and establish herself at the farm at Bouqueval, where she now is, with the Goualeuse. In this peaceful retreat she has found tranquillity, if not happiness; and the overlooking and management of the farm may serve to recreate her thoughts, and prevent them from dwelling too deeply on her past sorrows. As much to spare the almost morbid sensibility of Madame Georges, as because he dislikes so blason forth his good deeds, my lord has not even acquainted Mr. d'Harville with the fact of his having snatched his kinswoman from want."

"I now understand the double interest which my lord feels in discovering the traces of this poor woman's son."

"You will also judge from this, my dear baron, of the affection borne by his highness to the whole of this family, and how lively is his grief at seeing the young marquis so sad, amidst so many reasons for being happy."

"In fact, what does Mr. d'Harville lack? He unites everything that is desirable—birth, fortune, intellect, wit, and youth; his wife is hand-

some and accomplished, as virtuous as she is lovely ——"

"All this is true; and my lord never thought of the enquiries of which we have been speaking, until he had, in vain, sought to penetrate the dark melancholy of Mr. d'Harville, who, indeed, showed himself deeply sensible of the kindness of his highness, yet always kept within the same profound reserve as to the subject of his sadness. Perchance, it is some affair of the heart?"

"And yet he is said to be deeply enamoured of his wife; and she gives him no cause to be jealous. I often meet her in society: she is much followed—indeed, as a young and lovely woman always is; but her reputation has never suffered the slightest blemish."

"Oh, yes, the marquis takes the utmost pride in his young and beautiful wife; there has been only one slight difference between them, on account of the Countess Sarah Macgregor."

"She sees her, then?"

"By the most unfortunate chance, the father of the Marchioness d'Harville was some seventeen or eighteen years since acquainted with Sarah Seyton de Halsbury and her brother Tom, at that time residing at Paris, where they were patronised by the English ambassador's lady. Learning that the brother and sister were going to Germany, the old marquis gave them letters of recommendation and introduction to the father of my lord, with whom the old marquis was in correspondence. Alas! my dear De Graün, perhaps, had it not been for this recommendation, so many miseries would not have occurred; for my lord, but for that, would most probably never have known this woman. However, when the Countess Sarah returned hither, knowing the friendship of his highness and the marquis, she presented herself at the Hotel d'Harville, in the hope that she would there meet with my lord; for she just as eagerly pursues him, as he obstinately avoids and flies from her."

"To disguise herself as a man, in order to follow his highness, even into the city—it is only herself who would conceive such an idea."

"Perhaps she hoped to touch my lord's feelings, and so force him to an interview, which he has constantly avoided and refused. But, to return to Madame d'Harville. The marquis, to whom his highness had described the Countess Sarah in her true character, advised his wife to see her as seldom as possible; but the young marchioness, seduced by the hypocritical flatteries of the countess, offered some opposition to the wishes of the marquis on that head. Thence arose some trifling disagreements; but, assuredly, it is not for them that the deep melancholy of the marquis can at all arise."

"Oh! these women, these women! My dear Murphy, I very much regret that Madame d'Harville is in any way connected with this Sarah. That young and lovely marchioness cannot but be a loser in any dealings that she may have with so diabolical a creature."

"Talking of diabolical creatures," said Murphy, "here is a dispatch relative to Cecily, the unworthy wife of the estimable David."

"Between ourselves, my dear Murphy, this audacious offspring of a white father and a quadroon mother, would richly deserve the terrible punishment which her husband, the excellent negro doctor, was the instrument of inflicting upon the Schoolmaster, by order of his highness. She, also, has caused blood to flow; and her qualities are quite frightful."

"And yet she is so lovely and seducing! A perverse soul in a lovely body always causes me a twofold disgust."

"In that respect Cecily is doubly hateful; but I hope that this dispatch countermands the last orders of my lord, concerning that wretch."

"On the contrary, baron ——"

"His highness, then, still wishes her to be assisted in making her escape from the fortress in which she is sentenced to be confined for life?"

"Yes."

"And that her pretended ravisher should bring her to France—to Paris?"

"Yes; and, besides, this dispatch enjoins the utmost possible haste in the escape of Cecily, who is to be brought hither at a rate of travelling sufficiently rapid to allow of her arriving in a fortnight, at the very latest."

"I am lost in astonishment! His highness had always shown the utmost possible horror of that woman!"

"And he now manifests more of that horror than ever—if, indeed, that is possible."

"And yet he will have her brought to him! However, it must be as his highness thinks fit. To be sure, it is a very easy matter to apprehend Cecily again, if she does not accomplish that which he expects. Orders will be given by the son of the gaoler of the fortress of Geralstein to carry of the woman under the pretence of being madly in love with her, and all necessary facilities will be given to the accomplishment of his project. Enraptured with this opportunity of obtaining her liberty, this evil woman will accompany her supposed abductor to Paris. So far well; but, she will still remain under the weight of her sentence, she will still be an escaped and convicted offender, and I can easily get her sent back again whensoever my lord may require it."

"I must tell you, my dear baron, that when David learned from my lord that Cecily, his wife, was about to return, he was like one petrified. At length he exclaimed: 'I hope that your highness will not oblige me to see that monster.'—'Do not be alarmed,' replied my lord; 'you shall not be obliged to see her, but I have need of her presence in aid of certain projects of my own.' David was relieved from an enormous weight of care by those few words; nevertheless, I am sure that this circumstance awakened most painful feelings in his mind."

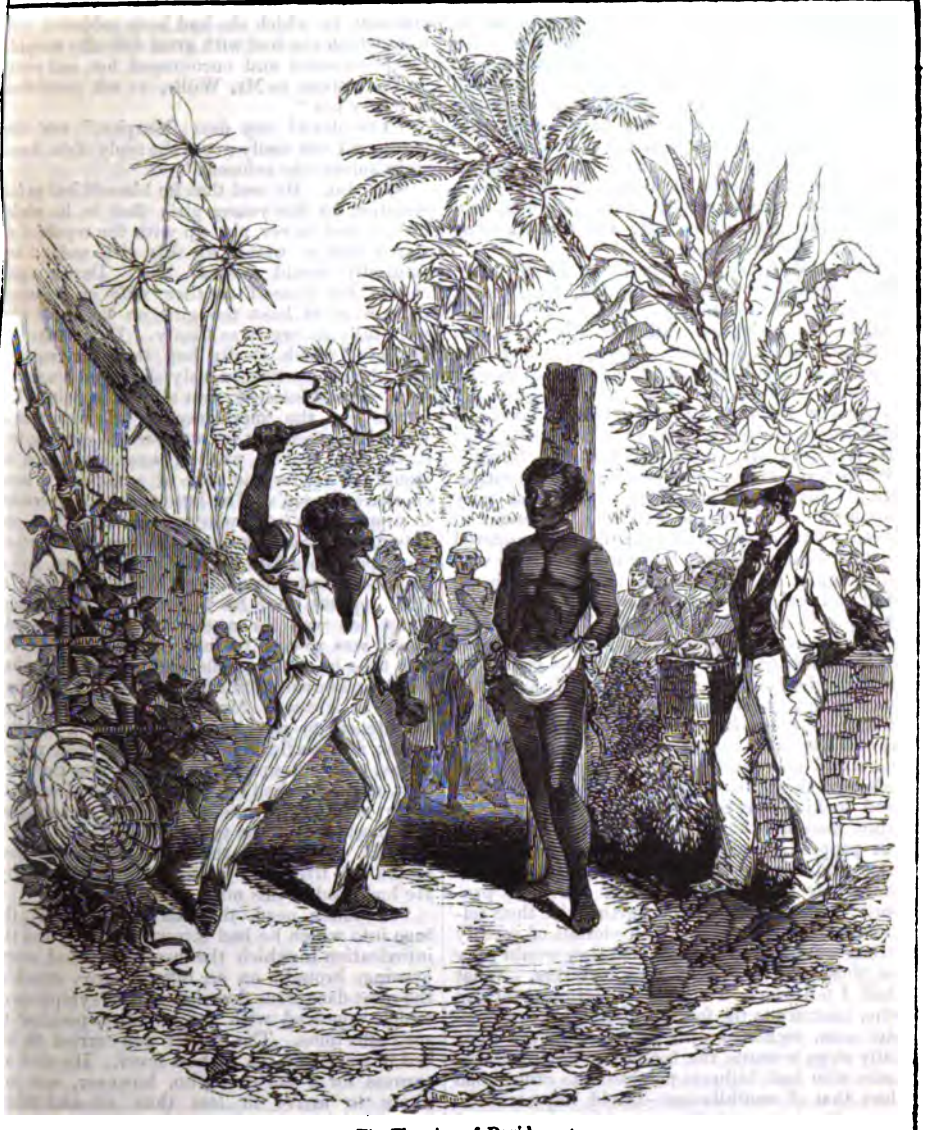
"Poor negro! he still loves her! She is said to be so extremely beautiful too!"

"Beautiful; far, far too beautiful. It would require the practised eye of a Creole to discover the mixed blood in the almost imperceptible shade which lightly colours her rosy finger-nails; our fairest Northern beauties have not a more transparent complexion, nor a whiter skin.'

"I was in France when his highness returned from America, bringing David and Cecily in his suite; I know that the excellent negro has ever since been attached to his highness by the warmest and most lively gratitude; but I have never learned how he became thus devoted to the service of our master, or how he happened to marry Cecily, whom I saw for the first time about a year after her marriage; and God alone knows how much scandal she had already caused!"

"I can inform you of every particular, my dear baron; for I accompanied monseigneur to America, where he snatched both David and Cecily from the most frightful condition."

"You are truly kind, my dear Murphy, and I am all attention," said the baron.



The Flogging of David.

CHAPTER XXII.

HISTORY OF DAVID AND CECILY.

"Mr. Willis, a rich planter of Florida, perceived in one of his black slaves, named David, employed in the infirmary attached to his estate, a remarkable degree of intelligence—a deep and attentive sympathy with the poor patients to whom he gave those cares and attentions which were ordered by their doctors—and, also, a very singular talent for botany, as applied to the medical profession, as was manifested by his having, without any instruction, composed and classified a sort of Flora of the plants of the estate and its neighbourhood. This establishment of Mr. Willis was situated on the sea-coast, and was fifteen or twenty leagues distant from the nearest town; and the doctors of the country, besides being extremely ignorant, were unwilling to travel so far, over bad roads and by indifferent conveyances. Wishing to provide a remedy for this great inconvenience, which was even dangerous in a country so subject to violent epidemics, and to have constantly residing with him a really able practitioner, the colonist, Mr. Willis, conceived the idea of sending David to Paris, there to study surgery and medicine. Delighted with the offer, the negro set out for France; the planter paid all his expenses, and, at the end of about eight years of diligent study, David received, with distinguished success, the degree of surgeon and physician, and returned to America, to place his skill at the disposal of his master."

"But David should now have looked upon himself as emancipated from his slavery, both in fact and in law, by his residence in France:"

"Yes; but David possesses a rare and very lofty feeling of loyalty; he had promised Mr. Willis to return, and he did so. He did not, so

to speak, consider that science his own property, which had been acquired at the expense of his master; and besides, he entertained the hope of bestowing amelioration, both moral and physical, upon the slaves, his own companions. He hoped to be not only their doctor, but also their support and their defender with the colonist."

"He must indeed be of a rare honesty, and of a holy love for his fellow slaves, to return to a master after living eight years at Paris, and amidst the most democratic and free-thinking youth in all Europe ——"

"By this trait you may judge of the man. Well, behold him again in Florida, and treated by Mr. Willis, it must be confessed, with kindness and consideration, eating at his table, and lodging beneath his roof. Nevertheless, the colonist was stupid, malignant, cruel, and, like all Creoles, very despotic; and he deemed himself extremely generous in giving David six hundred francs of salary. About six months after the return of Mr. David to Florida, a horrible typhus fever made its appearance on the estate. Mr. Willis was attacked by it, but was very promptly cured by the excellent treatment of David; and out of thirty negroes who suffered by this serious disease, there were but two who sunk under it. Mr. Willis, delighted with the skill and zeal thus displayed by David, raised his salary to twelve hundred francs. The black doctor was now the happiest man in the world; his brethren looked upon him as a friend especially provided for them by Providence. He had with great difficulty, it is true, obtained from their master some amelioration of their condition, but he still hoped for more; and in the meantime he moralised and consoled these poor people, and exhorted them to resignation. He told them of God looking down with equal eye upon the white man and the black; and of another world, not peopled by masters and slaves, but by the good and the wicked; of a future and eternal life, where men were no longer the mere property, the mere beasts of burthen, of their fellow creatures, but where the victims of earthly wrong would be so blessed, that they would pray for those who had been their torturers. What shall I tell you? To those unfortunate beings who, contrary to the feelings of all other and happier men, reckoned with a bitter pleasure their daily steps towards the tomb—to those unfortunates who had hitherto possessed no other hope than that of annihilation—David imparted the hope of an immortal liberty and happiness; and their chains became less heavy, and their labours less painful. David was their idol. A year thus passed on. Among the prettiest female slaves on this estate, the most remarkable was a *métisse** named Cecily. Mr. Willis took a sultanish fancy to this young girl; for the first time in his whole life, perhaps, he was met by a positive and obstinate refusal. Cecily loved; she loved David, who, during the raging of the epidemic, had tended her with a care to which she owed her life. Love, a chaste love, now repaid that care. David had too much delicacy of feeling to be capable of noising abroad his happiness before the day when he could espouse Cecily, which he intended to do at the completion of her seventeenth year. Mr. Willis, ignorant of this mutual attachment, had superbly thrown the handkerchief to the pretty *métisse;* and she, with a passion of indignant tears, told David of the brutal attempts to which she had been subjected, and from which she had with great difficulty escaped. David consoled and encouraged her, and went, on the instant, to Mr. Willis, to ask permission to marry her."

"The devil! my dear Murphy," said the baron; "I can easily guess the reply of our American sultan—he refused?"

"He did. He said that he himself had an inclination for this young girl; that in his whole life he had never put up with the repulse of a slave; that he wished for this girl, and that he assuredly would possess her. David might choose for himself another wife or mistress; there were at least ten girls on the estate who were fully as pretty as Cecily. David talked of his love, which Cecily had long reciprocated. The planter contemptuously shrugged his shoulders. David insisted; but all was in vain. The Creole had the impudence to tell him, that it was a bad precedent for a master to concede to a slave, and that it was an example which he would not set for the sake of satisfying a mere caprice of David's. The latter now condescended to supplication; the master grew impatient, and David, determined to humble himself no further, now spoke in a firm tone of his services, and of his disinterestedness. Mr. Willis, irritated at this, replied, that he was treated a thousand times too well for a slave. At these words, David was roused to indignation; and for the first time he spoke of the rights, which he had all along known that he had acquired by his residence in France. Mr. Willis was furious, and threatened to put him in irons as a revolted slave; and David replied in bitter and violent terms. Two hours afterwards he was tied to a post, and his naked back was lacerated with the whip; while Cicely, before his eyes, was dragged into the harem of the tyrant."

"The conduct of this planter was at once stupid and frightful; it was absurdity in cruelty. He had need of this man, after all ——"

"So much need, that, on that very day, the rage into which he had thrown himself, and the intoxication in which the beast indulged every evening, brought on an inflammatory attack of the most dangerous description, the symptoms of which appeared with the rapidity peculiar to such affections. The planter was carried to his bed in a state of the highest fever. He sent an express for a doctor; who, however, was not likely to arrive in less than six-and-thirty hours."

"Upon my word, this attack seems providential; the fellow's suffering and danger were richly merited."

"The illness made frightfully rapid progress. David alone, of all who surrounded the planter, had the power to save him; but Willis, suspicious, as the wicked always are, imagined that the black would take revenge, by administering poison in the medicine; for, after David had been flogged, he had been thrown into a dungeon. At length, terrified by the progress of the fever, and thinking that, at the worst, he had a greater chance of safety in trusting to the generosity of David, than in offering no opposition to the fever, Willis, after terrible hesitation, gave orders for David to be released from his chains."

"And David saved the planter?"

"For five successive days and nights he watched over him, as though he had been his father, combatting the disease with admirable skill, until at last he succeeded in defeating it,

* The Creole offspring of a white and a quadroon slave. The *métisses* only differ from some trifling peculiarities.

to the expressed astonishment of the other doctor, who did not arrive until the second day of the planter's illness."

"And, when restored to health, the colonist ——"

"Not wishing to blush before his slave, whose unparalleled generosity actually overwhelmed him, Mr. Willis, at a great expense, induced the other doctor to attach himself to his establishment—and David was sent back to his dungeon."

"That was horrible, but not at all astonishing; David would have been a sort of living remorse to this man."

"Moreover, this barbarous conduct was not dictated solely by vengeance and jealousy. The slaves of Mr. Willis loved David with all the ardour of gratitude; he was to them a saviour of both body and soul. They knew what cares he had bestowed upon the planter during his last illness, and shaking off the brutalising apathy into which slavery usually plunges a human being, they loudly testified the indignation, or rather the pain, they felt when they saw David lacerated by the whip. The exasperated planter imagined that, in this natural and grateful feeling, he saw the indication of a revolt, and knowing the influence that David had acquired among the slaves, he thought it likely that David would place himself at the head of an outbreak, for the purpose of being avenged upon his execrably ungrateful master. This absurd fear was a new motive to the planter to overwhelm poor David with ill-treatment, and to deprive him of power to execute the malicious design of which he suspected him."

"In this point of view, this brutal planter's conduct seems somewhat less stupid, though no less ferocious."

"A short time after these events, we arrived in America. Monseigneur had freighted a Danish brig at St. Thomas's, and we visited incognito all the settlements of the American coast along which we were sailing. We were magnificently received by Mr. Willis, who, in the evening of the day after our arrival, heated with wine into a cynical, boasting fit, told us, with horrible jesting, the history of David and Cecily—for I have hitherto forgotten to tell you, that he had thrown Cecily also into prison, by way of punishing the disdain with which she had received his infamous proposals. On hearing this horrible recital, his highness imagined that Mr. Willis was either drunk or lying: this man, however, though drunk, had told no lie; and to satisfy our apparent incredulity, he desired a slave to get a lantern, and went with us to the dungeon of David."

"Well?"

"In the whole course of my life, I have not seen so distressing a sight. Haggard, meagre, and half naked, David and the poor girl—chained at the middle, one at each end of the dungeon—resembled two spectres. The lantern that lighted us, threw a still sadder tinge over this terrible picture. David said not a word at our appearance; there was a horrible fixity in his look; and Willis said to him, with a cruel irony of tone: 'Well, doctor, how are you now? You who are so learned and clever—why don't you cure yourself?' The black replied with a sublime gesture and a single word; slowing raising his right hand, and extending his fore-finger towards the roof, he, without even deigning to look at the cruel and insulting planter, said in a solemn tone: 'God!' and then was silent. 'God!' repeated the planter, laughing loudly; 'tell God, then, to snatch you from my hands. I defy him to do it!' Then Willis, overcome by rage and intoxication, shook his clenched fist to heaven, and blasphemously exclaimed: 'Yes, I defy God himself to carry off my slaves, till they are dead. If he cannot do it, I deny his existence!'"

"He was a beastly fool."

"His brutality filled our hearts with disgust. Monseigneur did not say a word. We left the dungeon, which was situated on the sea-shore, and returned to our vessel, which lay at anchor at a short distance. At one o'clock in the morning, when all in the building were plunged in profound sleep, monseigneur landed with eight men, well armed, and going straight to the dungeon, forced open the doors, and carried off both David and Cecily. The two victims were safely on board our ship before our expedition had caused any alarm on shore, and then monseigneur and I went to the house of the planter. Strange contrast! These men torture their slaves, and yet take no precaution against their vengeance, but actually sleep with both doors and windows unsecured. We were thus enabled to go straight to the planter's bed-room, the interior of which was lighted by a small glass lamp. Monseigneur awakened the man, who sprang up in alarm, still heavy and embruted with the fumes of his debauch. 'You have to-night blasphemously defied God to snatch your two victims from you before their death, but He has taken them!' said monseigneur, solemnly. Then, taking a bag which I carried, containing twenty-five thousand francs in gold, he threw it upon the bed of that cruel man, and added: 'This will indemnify you for the loss of your two slaves. To your violence that destroys, I oppose a violence that saves. God will judge between us.' We then disappeared, leaving Mr. Willis motionless and stupefied, and imagining himself under the influence of a dream. In a few minutes more we had regained our brig, and put to sea."

"It seems to me, however, my dear Murphy, that his highness overpaid this wretch for the loss of his two slaves; for in strictness, David did not belong to him."

"We calculated, as nearly as we could, the expense of his studies during eight years, and then tripled the price of himself and Cecily as common slaves. Our conduct, I am aware, attacked the rights of property; but if you had seen the horrible condition in which we found the two victims, who seemed to be approaching their last agony, and if you had heard the drunken tyrant uttering his sacrilegious defiance, you would feel that monseigneur, as he said upon this occasion, *wished to act, as it were, on the part of Providence.*"

"It appears to me, that all this is both censurable and laudable, like that of the punishment of the Schoolmaster, my worthy squire. But had this affair no result?"

"It could not have. The brig was under Danish colours, the incognito of monseigneur was rigidly kept, and we were taken for wealthy English. To whom could Willis have complained—if even he had dared to complain at all? In fact, he had himself told us, and the doctor of monseigneur confirmed it in a *procès verbal*, that the two slaves would not have survived another week in this frightful dungeon. As it was, it required the most zealous and skilful care to rescue David and Cecily from death. At length, however,

they were pronounced out of danger; and, from that day forth, David has been attached to the suite of monsigneur as his medical man, to whom he shows the deepest devotion."

"David married Cecily, of course, on reaching Europe?"

"This marriage, from which so much happiness might reasonably have been expected, took place in the chapel of monsigneur's palace. But by a strange revolution of feeling, scarcely was Cecily in the enjoyment of a position she recently could so little have hoped for, ere, forgetting all that David had suffered for her, and all that she had suffered for him, she blushed in society for having married a negro. Seduced by a horribly depraved man, she committed her first fault. It would seem that, up to that period, the natural perversity of this unhappy girl had slept, requiring for its awakening into a frightful energy, only that first shock. You know all the scandal of her subsequent adventures. After two years of marriage, David, whose confidence in her was only equalled by his love, learned the full extent of her infamy—a thunderbolt aroused him from his blind security."

"It is said that he wished to kill his wife."

"Yes; but thanks to the entreaties of monsigneur, he consented to have her shut up for life in a fortress; and it is this fortress which monseigneur is now about to open, to your great astonishment, as well as mine, my dear baron. But it is growing late, and his royal highness is anxious that your courier should start for Gerolstein with as little delay as possible."

"Before two o'clock, he will be on the road; so now, my dear Murphy, I bid you farewell till evening."

"Till the evening, adieu."

"Have you then forgotten, that there is a grand ball at the * * * Embassy, and that his highness is to go thither?"

"True; I am continually forgetting that, since the absence of Colonel Varner and Count d'Harneim, I have the honour to fulfil the functions of chamberlain and aid-de-camp."

"Apropos of the count and the colonel, when do they return? Are their missions to be quickly achieved?"

"Monseigneur, as you are aware, my dear baron, has sent them away, that he may enjoy solitude and liberty, as long as possible. As to the mission which his highness has given them, the one to Avignon, and the other to Strasbourg, that he might get handsomely rid of them for a time, I will tell you the particulars of it some day when we are both more melancholy than we should be—for I defy the veriest hypochondriac to avoid laughing heartily, not only at this confidence, but at certain passages of the dispatches of these two worthy gentlemen, who set out upon their assumed missions with a most admirable gravity."

"To tell the truth, I have not been able to comprehend why the count and the colonel have been taken by monseigneur as his personal attendants."

"Why, is not Colonel Varner the most admirable type of military perfection? Is there in the whole Germanic Confederation a finer or more erect figure, a more splendid moustache, or a more undeniable martial frontispiece? And when he is belted and booted, spurred and plumed, can we possibly look upon a prouder, a more triumphant, or a more handsome—animal?"

"Exactly so; but it is precisely this animal beauty which makes him look anything but a very intellectual person."

"Well, monseigneur says that, thanks to the colonel, he is now enabled to endure the dullest fellows in the world. Previous to certain wearisome audiences, he closets himself for a half-hour or so with the colonel, and then he never fails to come forth radiant, gay, and ready to bid defiance to ennui personified."

"Just as the Roman soldier, previous to a long forced march, was wont to wear leaden sandals, so that, in putting them aside, all fatigue must seem light: I now understand the perfect utility of the gallant colonel. But the Count d'Harneim?"

"He, also, is very serviceable to monseigneur; for, in unceasingly bearing behind him an empty head, giving utterance to loud and brilliant nothings—in looking constantly upon this soap-bubble, so puffed out with nothing, which represents the theatrical and puerile side of royalty, his highness feels the more intimately and wholesomely the vanity of these sterile pomps; and, by contrast, he has often owed to the contemplation of the chattering and useless chamberlain, the most serious and fecund ideas."

"Moreover, let us be just, my dear Murphy. In what court can we possibly find a more perfect model of a chamberlain? who, better than this excellent d'Harneim, knows the innumerable rules and traditions of etiquette? who can, more gravely and majestically, carry an enamelled cross at his bosom, and a golden key at his back?"

"As to that, baron, monseigneur declares that the back of a chamberlain has a most especial physiognomy; it is, he says, an expression at once constrained and revolting, which is painful to look at; for, alas! it is at the back of the chamberlain that the bright symbol of his office glitters; and, according to monseigneur, that worthy d'Harneim seems always to present himself backwards, that all may at once understand his high importance."

"The fact is, that the one incessant subject of the count is the question of knowing by what fatal fancy they have placed the chamberlain's key behind his back; for it is related of him, that he once said, with a kind of bitter grief: 'What the devil! it is not with one's back that one opens a door, at any rate!'"

"Baron, the courier! the courier!" said Murphy, pointing to the clock.

"Ah! confound you, squire, to keep me chattering so long! It is your fault. Present my respects to his highness," said Mr. de Graün, hastily taking up his hat. "And now, farewell till evening, my dear Murphy."

"Till evening, farewell, dear baron. It will be late ere we meet, for I am quite certain that monseigneur will not let the day pass over without paying a visit to the mysterious house in the Rue du Temple."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HOUSE IN THE RUE DU TEMPLE.

In order to profit by the information which the Baron de Graün had furnished respecting La Goualeuse and Germain, the son of the Schoolmaster, it was necessary that Rodolph should go to the house in the Rue du Temple, recently inhabited by Germain, to endeavour to discover the retreat of the young man through the me-

dium of Mademoiselle Rigolette; a difficult task, probably, as the girl could hardly fail to be aware that the son of the Schoolmaster had the greatest interest in keeping his new abode completely unknown.

By hiring the room lately occupied by Germain in the house of the Rue du Temple, Rodolph would facilitate his researches, and obtain the power of closely observing the different classes of people by whom it was occupied.

On the same day of the conversation between the Baron de Graün and Murphy, Rodolph, plainly and unpretendingly dressed, directed his steps, about three o'clock on a dull, bitter afternoon in winter, towards the Rue du Temple. Situated in the centre of a dense trading neighbourhood, the house in question had nothing very remarkable in its external aspect; it was composed of a ground-floor, occupied by a man keeping a low drinking-shop, and of four stories, surmounted by garrets. A dark and narrow alley led to a small court-yard, or rather to a sort of square, dry well, five or six feet wide, completely destitute of air and light, and serving for the receptacle of all the filth thrown by the several occupants of the respective chambers, from the unglazed sashes of each landing-place.

At the foot of a damp and dirty staircase, a lurid and dull light indicated the lodge of the porter; a residence besmoked and begrimed by the burning of a lamp, necessary, even at broad day, to light the gloomy den into which Rodolph entered for the purpose of asking leave to view the empty room.

A lamp, placed behind a glass globe filled with water, which served as a reflector, lighted up the lodge; at the far end of which one might perceive a bed, covered with a quilt of patchwork, exhibiting a confused mass of every known colour and material, and on the left a table, whose marble top supported, by way of ornament, a small St. John in wax, with his white lamb and flaxen wig; the whole enclosed in a case of cracked glass, the breaches in which were ingeniously secured with strips of blue paper. Secondly, two old plated candlesticks, rusted with age, supporting, instead of candles, oranges, which had doubtless been given to the porteress by way of new year's gifts. Thirdly, two boxes, one in straw of many colours, the other encrusted with small shells, and both smelling strongly of the hulks or the house of correction.* (Let us hope, for the morality of the porteress of the Rue du Temple, that these were not given to her by their original owners or manufacturers.) And lastly, between the two boxes, and under a glass clock-cover, a pretty pair of boots of red morocco—a veritable pair of doll's boots, but most artistically and tastefully worked and ornamented. This *chef-d'œuvre*, as the ancient masters of the craft would style them, added to certain fantastic designs sketched on the walls of the lodge, with an innumerable quantity of old boots and shoes, sufficiently announced that the porter of this house was what is vulgarly called a cobbler.

When Rodolph ventured into this dungeon, Mr. Pipelet, the porter, temporarily absent, was represented by Madame Pipelet, who, seated near a stove about the centre of the apartment, seemed to listen with grave interest to the singing of her pot.

If the reader is desirous, let him call to mind the most ugly, the most wrinkled, the most sordid, the most carbuncled, in a word the most *venemous* of all possible porteresses, with a headdress composed of a Brutus wig, originally of a blond colour, but changed by time into every conceivable shade of red, brown, and yellow, the stiff and matted ends of which closely resembled a pitch-mop, and he has an exact likeness of Madame Pipelet, who, waking or sleeping, never laid aside this tasteful covering to her sexagenarian skull.

At the sight of Rodolph, the porteress inquired in a surly tone: "Where are you going?"

"Madam, I believe there is a room to let in this house?" said Rodolph, laying upon the word *madam* an emphasis which appeared to flatter Madame Pipelet, for she answered, somewhat blandly: "There is a room to let on the fourth floor, but you cannot see it just now; Alfred has gone out."

"Your son, no doubt, madam? May I ask what time he will return?"

"I am not speaking of my son, but my husband. Why should not my Pipelet be called Alfred, pray?"

"Oh, madam, there can be no doubt of his right to be so called; but, if you will permit me, I will await his return. I am rather desirous of taking this room, for both the street and the neighbourhood suit me, and the house particularly pleases me, because it seems to me to be admirably kept. However, before I look at the room, I should like to know if you, madam, can take charge of my little housekeeping? I make a point of always employing the authorised housekeeper belonging to the house, when such an arrangement is agreeable."

This proposition was expressed in such flattering terms—the housekeeper, too!—that it completely won Madame Pipelet, who replied: "Oh! certainly, sir; I will attend on you. I shall think it an honour; and I will treat you like a prince for six francs a month."

"Then be it six francs, madam. Your name, if you please?"

"Pomona-Fortunata-Anastasia Pipelet."

"Well, Madame Pipelet, having agreed to your own terms, will you please to tell me the price of the apartment that is to let?"

"With the closet, the apartment is a hundred and fifty francs a month; not a farthing can I abate: the proprietor is a regular screw—a gripe-all, sir."

"And his name?"

"Mr. Bras Rouge."

That name, and the remembrances which it called up, caused Rodolph to tremble.

"You say, Madame Pipelet, that the lessee of the house is ——"

"Mr. Bras Rouge."

"And he lives ——"

"Rue aux Fèves, No. 13; and he also keeps a wine-shop near the Champs Elysées."

There was no longer room for a doubt; it was beyond all question the same man. The coincidence seemed very strange to Rodolph.

"If Mr. Bras Rouge is only lessee," said he, "may I ask who the proprietor is?"

"Mr. Bourdon; but I have never had anything to do with any body in the matter, besides Mr. Bras Rouge."

Wishing to ingratiate himself more fully with the porteress, Rodolph resumed: "Look you, my dear Madame Pipelet, I am somewhat tired, and almost frozen; do me the favour to go to

* The convicts and other prisoners occupy their spare time almost exclusively in the manufacture of these boxes.

the spirit-shop, on the ground-floor, and bring me a bottle of cassia, and two glasses—or rather, three glasses, as your husband will return presently." And he placed a franc in the dirty hand of the old woman.

"Ah! what, sir! you wish, then, that one should adore you at the very out-set!" exclaimed the porteress, whose carbuncled nose seemed to be suddenly illuminated by the fires of a Bacchic covetuousness. "To be sure! this warms my heart—this just suits me; but I will only bring a couple of glasses. I and Alfred always drink out of the same glass! Poor dear! he is so fond of showing delicate attentions to women."

"Go, Madame Pipelet; we will wait for Alfred."

"Ah! but if any one comes, will you mind the lodge?"

"Never fear, madam."

The old woman went out.

After a few minutes, a postman tapped at the window of the lodge, and putting his hand into the apartment, merely said: "Three sous."

"Six sous, I suppose you mean, as there are two letters," said Rodolph.

"One is free," said the postman.

Having paid the demand, Rodolph at first looked mechanically at the two letters which had been given to him; but on a closer examination he seemed to think them worthy of more particular attention. One of them, addressed to Madame Pipelet, exhaled through its envelope of satin paper a strong scent of musk; upon its seal of red wax were the initials C. R., surmounted by a helmet, and resting on the starred supporter of the Legion of Honour; the address was traced in a bold, firm hand. The heraldic pretence of this cross and this casque made Rodolph smile, and confirmed him in the idea that the letter, perfumed though it was, had not been written by a female. But who, then, could be this scented and emblazoned correspondent of Madame Pipelet? The other letter, written upon common paper, and closed with a wafer, which had evidently been pressed down with a thimble, was addressed to "Mr. Cæsar Bradamanti, Operative Dentist." Evidently disguised, the writing of this superscription was entirely composed of capital letters. Whether founded on a true or false presage, that letter appeared to Rodolph to have a melancholy appearance. He remarked, that some of the letters of the address were effaced in a part of the paper which felt soft. A tear had evidently fallen there!

Madame Pipelet now returned with the bottle of cassia and two glasses.

"I have loitered, have I not, sir?" said she; "but when once one gets into Father Joseph's shop, there is no such thing as getting out again. Ah, the old rascal—he is so insinuating!"

"Here are two letters that the postman has left for you madam," said Rodolph.

"Oh, dear me! Pray, excuse me, sir. You have paid for them, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"You are very kind. Ah! then I will take that out of the money I have brought you back. How much is it?"

"Three sous," replied Rodolph, smiling at the singular mode of repayment adopted by Madame Pipelet. "But may I observe, without wishing to be impertinent, that you have there a correspondent whose notes smell marvellously nice."

"Let us see then," said the porteress, taking up the satin-paper note. "Upon my word, that is true; this note has quite the air of a *billet-doux*. Ah, indeed! a real love-letter, depend upon it, sir; and yet, who is the villain that would dare to ——"

"And suppose your husband had found it here, madam?"

"For heaven's sake, don't mention that, or I shall faint in you arms! After all, how stupid I am," said the porteress, shrugging her shoulders, I know all about it, now; it is from the *commandant*. Bless my soul! what a stew I have been in, for my Alfred is as jealous as a Turk!"

"But here is another letter, addressed to Mr. Cæsar Bradamanti."

"Ah! yes, the dentist on the third floor; I will put it into the letter-*boot*."

Rodolph fancied he must have mistaken her words; but he saw Madame Pipelet gravely throw the dentist's letter into an old boot which was hanging against the wall. He looked at her with surprise, and said: "How! you have put that letter ——"

"Well, sir, I have put it into the letter-boot; no mistakes can happen; when any of the lodgers come in, either I or Alfred shake the boot, and each takes out what belongs to him."

While thus speaking, she had broken the seal of the letter that was addressed to her; she turned it about in every direction, with something like embarrassment, and at length said to Rodolph: "It is Alfred who always undertakes the reading of my letters, because I am not able to do so myself. Will you be so kind, sir, as to look over this for me?"

"Most willingly, madam," said Rodolph, not a little curious to know something of this correspondent of Madame Pipelet. He read as follows, upon the satin-paper note, in the corner of which were repeated the casque, the letters C. R., the heraldic supporters, and the cross of Honour:—"To-morrow, Wednesday, at eleven o'clock, let the fires be lighted in both rooms, let all the coverings be taken off the furniture, especial care being taken not to injure the gildings while dusting, or burn the carpet while lighting the fires. If, perchance, I should not be in when a lady asks for me under the name of Mr. Charles, show her up to my apartments, bringing the key down, that I may receive it on my arrival."

Spite of its want of style, this note sufficiently informed Rodolph as to what was going on, and he said to the porteress: "Who, then lives on the first floor?"

The old woman placed her yellow and skinny finger upon her hanging lip, and said, with a malicious grin: "Mum! it is a love affair."

"I only ask you, my dear Madame Pipelet, because before one lodges in a house, one likes to know ——"

"Yes, yes, that's all right and proper; for that matter, I will willingly tell you all I know about it, and not take me long either. Well, sir, about six weeks ago, an upholsterer came here to look at the first-floor, which was then to let, and to ask the price of it; and on the following morning he came again, with a handsome, fair young man, with small mustachios, fine linen, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour at his button-hole. The upholsterer called this young man—*Commandant*."

"He is a military man, then?"

"Military!" returned Madame Pipelet, shrugging her shoulders; "get along with you—it's

about the same as if Alfred were to dub himself porter to a prince."

"How so?"

"He only belongs to the National Guard: the porter merely called him, 'commandant' just to flatter him, the same as it would flatter Alfred to call him *concierge*. At length, when the commandant (we know him by no other name) had seen all, he said to the upholsterer: 'This is good, this will suit me; see the proprietor, and arrange about it.' 'Yes, Commandant!' said the other. And, on the following day, the upholsterer, in his own name, became security to Mr. Bras Rouge, and paid him six months in advance, as he appeared not to wish the young man to be known. Very soon afterwards the workmen came, turned the first-floor topsy-turvy, brought sofas, silk curtains, glasses in gilt frames, and other superb goods, and made the place as grand as one of the coffee-rooms upon the Boulevards! Not to mention the innumerable carpets, so thick and so soft, that one would fancy oneself walking upon the backs of animals. When all this was done, the commandant returned to see it all, and said to Alfred: 'Can you undertake the care of this apartment? I shall not come here often; but I shall want you to make fires, and have everything in order for me, whenever I drop you a post letter.' 'Yes, certainly, Commandant," said my flattering Alfred. 'And how much will you charge?' 'Twenty francs a month, commandant.' 'Twenty francs a month, porter? Why, you surely must be joking!' And behold our handsome youth bating down like a beggarly scoundrel, to get the best of poor folks; and all this for two or three miserable francs, after going to the most abominable expenses for an apartment that he does not even live in! At length, by dint of battling, we got twelve francs a month out of him—the paltry two-farthing commandant! What a difference between him and you, sir! You do not call yourself commandant; you have no paltry pride, and you agree for six francs at the first word."

"And has this commandant been back again?"

"Oh, you shall see; it's a rummy set out. It would seem that our commandant is prettily housed. He has already written three times, the same as to-day, to light the fire, and get everything ready for the arrival of a lady whom he expected. Well! all has been got ready, but ——"

"No lady has come?"

"Listen. The first of the three times, the commandant arrived, all joyous and radiant, humming opera tunes, and swaggering like a very happy fellow; he waited two hours—not a soul came near him. As he was going out past our lodge, by way of a lark, Pipelet and I went up to him, and said: 'Ah! commandant, there has been no little lady to ask for you at all!' 'Very well! very well!' he replied to us, in a tone of fury; and away he strutted, biting his fingers with rage. The second time, before he arrived, a porter brought a little note, addressed to Mr. Charles. I guessed that the commandant was to be done a second time; and Pipelet and I were just laughing about it, when my gentleman arrived. 'Commandant,' said I, carrying the back of my hand to my wig, like a genuine trooper, 'here is a letter for you; it seems there is another counter-march to-day.' He gave me a fierce look, opened the letter, read it, changed by turns very red and pale, and then away he went, humming and strutting, but he was confoundedly vexed, for all that. 'Ah, ha! my two-farthing swell,' thought I, 'there's another dose for you; that will teach you to give only twelve francs a month for looking after your fine rooms!'"

"And the third time?"

"Ah! the third time I really thought it was all right. The commandant came, his eyes almost leaping out of his head with pleasure. But to do him justice, though, he is really a handsome young man, for all his meanness; well dressed, and stinking of musk like a civet cat. Well! there was my gentleman, so stiff and starched up, that he could not condescend to look upon us poor people; he scarcely touched the ground, he was so puffed up with pleasure and conceit; he took the key from us, and, pointing to his apartment, said, in proud and triumphant tones, as though he would revenge himself for having been fooled twice before: 'When the lady comes, you will direct her to my apartments.' Well, Pipelet and I were so curious to have a look at the little lady—though even now we had our doubts as to her coming—that we left our lodge, and went and hid ourselves behind the door of the alley, to watch for her. This time, sure enough, we saw a small blue fiacre arrive, with the blinds closely drawn down. 'Good!' here the lady is at last,' said I to Alfred; 'let us go a little aside, or perhaps we shall offend her.' The coachman opened the door, and then we saw a little lady, whose countenance was hidden by a black veil, to say nothing of the pocket-handkerchief which she held constantly up to her mouth, for she seemed to be weeping; but, behold you, when the steps were down, the lady, instead of alighting, said a few words to the coachman, who got upon his box again, and drove back."

"Then the lady did not get out?"

"No; she threw herself back in the coach, and pressed her hands to her eyes. I rushed forward, and said to the coachman, before he could drive off: 'Hallo! my fine fellow, what are you going to drive back again?' 'Yes,' said he. 'And where to?' asked I. 'To where I came from,' he replied. 'And where did you come from?' said I. 'From the Rue Saint Dominque, at the corner of the Rue Belle Chasse.'"

At these words, Rodolph trembled. The Marquis d'Harville, one of his dearest friends, as has already been stated, and who had for some time past laboured under the deepest melancholy, lived in the Rue St. Dominque, and at the corner of the Rue Belle Chasse. Was it the Marquise d'Harville who was thus hastening to her ruin? Had her husband suspicions of her misconduct—misconduct which was the sole cause of the misery by which he was devoured? These doubts now rushed upon the mind of Rodolph. And yet he was acquainted with all the intimates of the marquise, and he could not remember to have ever seen her visited by any one resembling the description given to him of the *commandant*. After all, the young woman who had been spoken of in connection with the commandant, might easily have taken a coach in the Rue St. Dominque, without living there; nothing proved to Rodolph that this imprudent woman really was the marquise; nevertheless, he could not rid himself of certain vague but painful suspicions. His disturbed and thoughtful air did not escape the notice of the portress.

"Well, sir, what are you thinking so deeply about?"

"I was wondering what could be the reason for the lady, after coming as far as the very door, so suddenly changing her mind."

"What would you have, sir — a fright, an idea, or a superstition? We poor women are so weak! We are such sad, cowardly things; are we not, sir?" said the horrible porteress, with an air of ferocious timidity. "It seems to me," she then continued, "that if I had been going secretly to visit—Alfred, we'll say—that I should have been obliged to go backward and forward I don't know how often. But as for visiting your tip-top swells in this way, I could not have done such a thing. No, never! Poor old fellow! while my dear husband is alive, no one shall boast that I ever ——"

"I fully believe you, Madame Pipelet—but about this young woman?"

"I do not know whether she was young—we could not see even the tip of her nose; however, she went away as she had come, without beat of drum or sound of trumpet. If Alfred and I had received ten francs to drink her health, we could not have been better pleased."

"Why so?"

"Because we knew what a wry face the commandant would pull at this new disappointment. In the first place, instead of going at once to tell him that the lady had taken herself back, we allowed him to wait, and fret and fume for a whole hour. Then I went up, with only my list shoes on my feet; I reached his door, which was half open; I pushed it, and it made a noise. The staircase is as dark as pitch, and so is the entrance to the apartment; so, behold you, as I entered the room, my commandant seizes me round the waist, and exclaims: 'My dearest angel! what makes you so late?'"

Notwithstanding the more than grave thoughts by which he was overwhelmed, Rodolph could not repress a smile, as he surveyed the grotesque wig and the abominable, carbuncled and wrinkled visage of the heroine of this ridiculous scene.

Madame Pipelet resumed, after indulging in a hilarous grimace, which, for the moment, made her look more hideous than ever: "Eh, eh, eh! that was a good one, was it not? But you shall see. I did not reply, but held my breath, for the sake of enjoying the mistake. For a minute or two, the commandant kept hugging me closely to him, then, all of a sudden, the brute pushed me away, with as much disgust as though he had touched a spider, exclaiming: 'But who the devil have I here?' 'It is I, commandant, the porteress,' replied I; 'and, as such, you should keep your hands quiet, and not take me by the waist, nor call me your angel, nor tell me that I am late in coming! Suppose Alfred had but been in the way?' 'What do you want here?' cried he, in a furious tone. 'Commandant, the little lady has come in a coach.' 'Well! and why don't you make haste and show her up? Did I not tell you to do so?' 'Yes, commandant, it is true that you told me to show the little lady up.' 'Well?' 'Only the little lady——' 'Well, speak out, woman!' 'Oh! the little lady went away again as soon as she came.' 'Ah! you have said or done something to cause her to do that,' said he, more infuriated than ever. 'No, commandant, the lady did not even alight from the vehicle; as soon as the coachman opened the door, she told him to shut it, and to take her back to the place from which he brought her.' 'The carriage cannot have got far!' exclaimed the commandant, rushing towards the door. 'Oh, yes, it has, for it has been gone for above an hour.' 'An hour!—an hour! Why did you not let me know sooner?' 'Because, commandant, Alfred and I thought we would spare you, as long as we could, the heavy tidings of your *third* disappointment,' said I, in the gentlest and most delicate manner. 'There!' thought I, 'put that in your pipe, and smoke away the recollection of having taken *me* to your arms, instead of your fine madam.' 'Get out of the room!' bawled the commandant; 'you are eternally boring me with your infernal stupidity!' And with this he tore off his dressing-gown, and threw it, with his fine Greek cap, made of velvet embroidered with gold, on to the floor, and trampled upon them like a madman. It was a handsome gown, too. And then, if you had seen him prancing up and down the room!—he resembled for all the world a wild beast in a cage."

"But were you not afraid that he would not employ you again?"

"Oh, he was too good a judge for that; he knew that we had discovered the residence of his fine lady, and had he said anything to us, we should have *blown* upon the whole affair. And then, who does he suppose is going to look after his rooms for his beggarly twelve francs!—some strange woman, I suppose; but, no, no—we would soon make the place too hot to hold her. Oh, the mean scamp! Do you know, sir, that he had the dirtiness to examine his wood, that he might keep account how many lumps he burned in warming his rooms. Oh! I am sure he is some upstart, some nobody, who has suddenly become enriched. The fellow has the head of a lord, and the heart and body of a beggar, who squanders with one hand and nips and pinches with the other. I do not wish him any harm, but it does immensely amuse me to see how the little woman baulks him. I will wager anything it will be the same thing to-morrow. I must go and inform the fishwoman who lives next door, who enjoys a joke as well as I do, and is quite as anxious to catch a glimpse of 'madam.' If she comes, we will, this time, see whether she is fair or dark, and whether she is pretty. Now, sir, when we remember that there is some poor devil of a husband in the affair, it is very laughable, is it not? But that is the poor man's own look out. Oh, dear, oh dear! pray excuse me—my pot is boiling over, and I must look after my dinner. Do you like the thick or the thin tripe? As for my Alfred, he likes it thick, and I've a beautiful piece here. Poor dear fellow! he is so fond of tripe, that I think he would betray his country—yes, his beautiful France—for a dish of thick tripe!"

While Madame Pipelet thus busied herself with her household matters, Rodolph gave himself up to the most painful reflections. The female spoken of (whether or not the Marquise D'Harville), had, no doubt, for a long time hesitated, before she had agreed to a first or second rendezvous; then, alarmed at the consequences of her own imprudence, a salutary remorse had prevented her from fulfilling her dangerous promise. It was possible that the Marquise d'Harville *might* be the heroine of this sad tale; but by what fatal chance could her husband, young, witty, devoted, generous, and above all, tenderly attached to his wife, be sacrificed to a being so essentially silly as the commandant? Was the marquise solely taken with the countenance and

person of this man, said to be so beautiful? Yet Rodolph knew the Marquise d'Harville to be a woman of fine feeling, intellect, and superior taste, and against whose fair fame the slightest whisper had never been heard. After mature reflection, he persuaded himself that the wife of his friend and the little intriguing woman in the blue coach could not be one and the same person.

Madame Pipelet having completed her immediate culinary arrangements, returned to renew the conversation with Rodolph.

"Who lives on the second floor?" inquired he of the porteress.

Mother Burette—such a wonderful woman for the cards! She will read in your hand as though it were a book. There are many first-rate people who come to her to have their fortunes told; and she makes her weight in money. However, fortune-telling is only one of her trades."

"What does she do besides?"

"She is a sort of private pawnbroker."

"Ah! I understand; then the second-floor lodger lends upon pawns the money she has realised by telling fortunes?"

"To be sure she does, and is far more reasonable and easy to deal with than the regular pawnbrokers. She does not confuse you with a heap of tickets. Not at all. You take a shirt worth three francs to Mother Burette, and she lends you ten sous; at the end of a week, you take her twenty sous, or she will keep the shirt. How simple all that is—eh? All in round figures, you see; a child might understand it! And to see the droll things that they bring to her! Would you believe what she sometimes lends upon? I have seen her advance money upon a grey parrot, that swore like a trooper—the blackguard!"

"Upon a parrot? but what then was its value?"

"Wait, I'll tell you. The parrot was well known; it belonged to the widow of a factor, Madame Herbelot, living close by, who, it was also well understood, valued her parrot next to her life. Well, Mother Burette said to her: 'I will lend you ten francs upon the beast, but if by this day week, at noon, you do not bring me my twenty francs (with interest, it would amount to that, in round numbers)—if you do not bring me my twenty francs, with the expenses of the beast's keep, I will give your 'pretty Poll' a little salad well seasoned with arsenic.' Ah! she knows her business well, does Madame Burette: she had her twenty francs, and Madame Herbelot took away her ugly beast of a parrot, that jabbers all the bad language of the street, and used to make my poor dear Alfred quite blush—he is so modest."

"Mother Burette has no other trade, I suppose?"

"She has no other, that I know of. And yet, I don't exactly understand the sly and secret goings on in a little room, into which no one goes except Mr. Bras Rouge and an old one-eyed woman, called La Chouette."

Rodolph looked at the porteress with astonishment; and giving her own interpretation to the surprise of her future lodger, she said to him: "It is a droll name, is it not, 'La Chouette?'"

"Yes; does that woman often come here?"

"She had not made her appearance for six weeks, but the day before yesterday, we saw her again. She's rather lame, too."

"And what did she want with the fortune-teller?"

"That is more than I know—at least, as to what takes place, in the little room of which I have spoken to you, where La Chouette, Mr. Bras Rouge, and Madame Burette alone go in. I have, however, particularly remarked, that on those occasions the one-eyed woman always brings a parcel in her basket, and that Mr. Bras Rouge also carries a bundle under his cloak, and that they never take anything away."

"And what do those parcels contain?"

"I know nothing about that, except that they kick up the devil's own row; and then there's a scent upon the staircase of sulphur, charcoal, and melted lead, or the like, and you hear blow, blow, blow, like a smith's forge. I verily believe that Mother Burette, at those times, deals with the old one, or practises magic—at least, so says Mr. Cæsar Bradamanti, the third-floor lodger. Ah! there is a learned individual, that Mr. Cæsar. When I say an 'individual,' I ought to say an Italian, for he speaks French as well as you or me, though with a great deal of accent—but that's nothing. He is a real learned man, that; and he understands simples, and will take out your teeth, not for the sake of money, but merely for the honour. Yes, sir, for pure honour; for if you have six bad teeth, he will pull out the first five for nothing, and only charge for the sixth! It is no fault of his, if you have only the sixth. Then he sells all sorts of remedies for all sorts of complaints—diseases of the stomach, coughs, colds, and every complaint you can think of. He makes up his own drugs and medicines, and employs as his assistant the son of our lessee, little Tortillard. He says his master is going to buy a horse and a red coat, with the intention of selling his medicines in the places of public resort, and that he (young Tortillard) is to be dressed like a page, and to beat a drum to attract customers."

"It seems to me that the son of your landlord fills but a very humble situation."

"His father says he wishes to break him in betimes, otherwise he would end his days at the scaffold. He certainly is the ugliest and most mischievous little rascal in the world. He has played off more than one trick upon Mr. Cæsar Bradamanti, who is the very cream of worthy creatures. Since he cured Alfred of his rheumatism, we have worn him in our very hearts; and yet, sir, there are people ill-natured enough to say—but no—that makes the hair of one's head stand on end! Alfred says, that if it were true it would send him to the galleys."

"But what is it?"

"Ah! I dare not—I could never venture, it is so ——"

"Well, say no more about it."

"On the faith of an honest woman, it is very improper to repeat such things."

"Say no more about it, Madame Pipelet."

"And yet, as you will be our lodger, it is but proper to forewarn you, that there are falsehoods going about. You are, I suppose, in a position to be on terms of acquaintance and friendship with Mr. Cæsar? Now, unless you are on your guard with respect to these reports, you would most probably be disgusted with his acquaintance—so just listen to me, and I'll whisper in your ear what people say of him." And, as Rodolph inclined his head, the old woman muttered a few words, which caused him to start with a gesture of horror and disgust.

"Oh, but this is frightful!" he exclaimed. "Are such abominable crimes really possible?"

"Shocking, isn't it? But treat it as I do—all scandal and lies. Is it likely, a man who has

cured Alfred of his rheumatism—a man who will draw five out of six teeth gratis—a man who has certificates from all Europe, and who pays his rent by a cheque upon his banker? Ah, well! I'd suffer death, rather than believe it!"

While Madame Pipelet thus manifested her indignation against calumniators, Rodolph called to mind the letter addressed to the charlatan—that letter written upon coarse paper, and in a counterfeited hand, half effaced by the traces of tears. In these tears, in that mysterious letter, addressed to that man, Rodolph saw the indications of a drama, a terrible drama. An involuntary presentiment told him that the frightful reports were well founded.

"Ah! here comes my Alfred!" exclaimed the porteress, "and he will tell you as well as I, that they are foul-mouthed slanderers who accuse that poor Mr. Cæsar Bradamanti, who has completely cured poor Alfred's rheumatism."

Mr. Pipelet entered the lodge with a grave and magisterial air. He was about sixty years of age; he had an enormous nose, a respectable corporation, and a broad countenance, illuminated after the fashion of the famous nutcrackers of Nuremberg. This strange mask of a face was shaded by a broad-brimmed hat, rusty with age. Alfred, who was as constant to his hat as his wife was to her Brutus wig, was further attired in an old green coat, with enormous skirts, and with lappels which were, so to speak, turned up with grease, so brightly did the great patches here and there shine. Notwithstanding his broad-brimmed hat and green coat, which had about them an air of ceremony, and might be esteemed by the wearer as full-dress, Mr. Pipelet had not laid aside the humble emblem of his business; a leathern apron described its triangle upon the long waistcoat, which was checquered with as many colours as the patchwork counterpane of Madame Pipelet.

The porter's recognition of Rodolph was not without a certain mixture of affability; but, alas! his smile was melancholy, and his whole manner bespoke the man of silent grief.

"Alfred, this gentleman wishes to take the room and closet upon the fourth floor," said Madame Pipelet, presenting Rodolph to her husband; "and we have only waited for you to drink a glass of cordial, which the gentleman has sent for."

This delicate attention on the part of Rodolph at once won the confidence of the porter, who, raising his hand to the enormous brim of his hat, said in a bass voice, that would have done honour to a cathedral singer: "We shall, I hope, satisfy you as porters, as you will, doubtless, satisfy us as a lodger—birds of a feather flock together." Then, suddenly interrupting himself, Mr. Pipelet said in a tone of anxiety: "Provided that the gentleman is not a painter!"

"No; I am a merchant's clerk."

"Then, sir, my most humble duty to you, and I congratulate you, that Nature did not make you one of those monsters called artists."

"Artists, monsters!" exclaimed Rodolph.

Mr. Pipelet, instead of replying, raised his clasped hands towards the ceiling, and gave utterance to a melancholy sound between a grunt and a groan.

"It is the painters who have empoisoned the life of Alfred, it is they who have caused him that deep melancholy of which I spoke to you," whispered Madame Pipelet. Then she continued in a louder tone, and with a caressing manner: "Come, Alfred, be reasonable; do not think of the fellow; you will make yourself ill, and not be able to eat your dinner."

"No! I will have courage and reason," said Mr. Pipelet, with a sad and dignified resignation; "he has done me much harm—he has been my persecutor, my torturer, for a long time; but *now* I hold him in contempt! Painters!" added the porter, turning to Rodolph; "ah, sir! they are the plague, the pest, the ruin of a house!"

"You have had a painter lodging with you, then?"

"Alas! yes, sir; we have indeed had one," said Mr. Pipelet, bitterly; "a painter, too, whose name was Cabrion!" And at this remembrance, notwithstanding his assumed moderation, the worthy man convulsively clenched his fists.

"Was he the last occupant of the apartment that I am about to take?" asked Rodolph.

"No, no; the last lodger who had it was a worthy, excellent young man, named Germain, but his predecessor was Cabrion. Ah, sir! since his departure, this Cabrion has driven me almost stark staring mad."

"Have you then so much regretted him?" asked Rodolph.

"Regretted Cabrion!" exclaimed the astounded porter; "regret Cabrion! Why, only fancy, sir; Mr. Bras Rouge paid him two months' rent to get rid of him, for we had been unfortunate enough to let him the room for a term. You have no idea of the horrible tricks that he has played upon us and our lodgers. To give you a proof of his villany—there is not a single wind instrument, mentionable or unmentionable, which he has not made his accomplice in the crime of disturbing the lodgers! Yes, from the French horn to the serpent, he has abused everything, carrying his rascality so far as deliberately to play out of tune on the same key for two hours at a time. It was quite enough to madden me. More than twenty petitions were sent to Mr. Bras Rouge, to get rid of the beggar, and at length he did so by paying him two months' rent—rather droll, is it not, a landlord paying rent to his lodger? but it had been better to pay him three months, than allow him to stay. Well, he went; and then you would suppose that there was an end of Cabrion. I will show you. Next night, at eleven o'clock, I had just gone to bed, when, rap, rap, rap. I pulled the string, and some one came to the lodge, and said: 'Good evening, porter; will you oblige me with a lock of your hair, if you please?' My wife said to me: 'It is some one who has mistaken the door.' So I replied to the stranger: 'It is not here; try next door.' 'But is not this No. 17, and is not the porter's name Pipelet?' responded the voice. 'Yes,' said I, 'my name is Pipelet, certainly.' 'Well then, Pipelet, my boy, I have come to beg a lock of your hair for Cabrion; it is a fancy he has taken, and he is determined to have it.'"

As he uttered these last words, Pipelet regarded Rodolph with a mournful shake of the head, mechanically crossed his hands, and looked the very personification of sculptured grief.

"Yes, sir, do you see," continued Pipelet, "he sends to me, his mortal enemy, whom he has overwhelmed with injury and insult, and impudently asks for a lock of my hair—a favour which ladies often refuse a favourite lover!"

"But supposing this Cabrion had been as good a lodger as Mr. Germain?" returned Rodolph, with imperturbable coolness.

"Had he been the best lodger that ever entered a house, I would not have granted such a request," said the porter, majestically raising his flapped hat from his head as he spoke; "it is against my principles and habits—but in that case, I should have refused him with all possible politeness."

"And that is not all," chimed in the porteress; "picture to yourself, sir, that, from that day forth, we have had no peace, morning, noon, or night; that frightful Cabrion sends a swarm of blackguards like himself, who come here one after the other, at all hours and at all times, to ask Alfred for a lock of his hair—always for Cabrion!"

"Ah, sir!" sighed poor Pipelet, "had I committed the most horrible crimes, I could not have my sleep more pitilessly broken! Every instant I awake with a start, expecting to hear the voice of the accursed Cabrion. I suspect every one that approach me; in every one I see an enemy; I have lost all the blandness of manner for which I had been famed, and have become gloomy, suspicious, and ill-natured. That infernal Cabrion has poisoned my existence."

And Mr. Pipelet heaved so profound a sigh, and gave so mournful a shake of the head, that his broad-brimmed hat fell forward, and completely veiled his careworn features.

"I can now understand your dislike to painters," said Rodolph; "but, at least, the Mr. Germain of whom you have spoken made you some amends for this Mr. Cabrion?"

"Oh, yes, sir! there was a kind, good young man, as free as daylight, so obliging, and so gay—but then his gaiety was kept within proper bounds, and was of the right sort—not like that of the wretch Cabrion, whose sole delight seemed to be in worrying people to death with his senseless jokes—the devil fetch him!"

"Come, come, calm yourself, my dear Mr. Pipelet; do not excite yourself too much. Where now is the residence of that excellent young man, that pattern of lodgers, Mr. Germain?"

"No one knows, or will know, where he now lodges—that is to say, with the exception of Mademoiselle Rigolette."

"And who is Mademoiselle Rigolette?" asked Rodolph.

"A little needle-woman, the other lodger on the fourth floor," replied Madame Pipelet; "another pearl of a lodger! She always pays her rent in advance, and keeps her little place so clean, and is so obliging to every one, and as gay and happy as a bird. Poor thing! she is so industrious too; sometimes earning as much as two francs a-day, by working early and late: yet often she does not earn half so much, if she tries ever so hard. Ah! poor girl, she too has her cares."

"But how happens it that she is the only person acquainted with the present residence of Mr. Germain?"

"When he left the house," returned Madame Pipelet, "he said to us: 'I do not expect any letters; but if by chance any should come for me, you will give them to Mademoiselle Rigolette.' And she would be well worthy of this confidence, even were it a money-letter, would she not, Alfred?"

"The fact is, that there would not be a syllable to say against Mademoiselle Rigolette," said the porter, in severe tones, "if she had not allowed herself to be wheedled by that infamous Cabrion."

"Oh, as to that, Alfred, I think nothing of that—a few harmless jokes passed between them, that's all," interrupted the porteress; "for although Mademoiselle Rigolette is so merry and good-natured, she is just as prudent and particular as I am myself. You should see the strong bolt on the inside of her door! If her next-door neighbour *will* make love to her, that's no fault of hers—it arises from the locality; for it was just the same with the clerk who had the room before Cabrion, as after that infamous painter it was with Mr. Germain. Again I say, there is nothing in that; it arises from their being next door to each other, which naturally brings about a little love-making, but nothing further."

"Oh!" said Rodolph, "then I suppose whoever lodges in the room I am about to take, must, as a matter of course, make love to Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Necessarily, sir; how can you be good neighbours without? The two rooms touch each other; well, between two young people, there is always something wanted—a light, or a bit of tinder, or a match, or a drop of water; and, as for water, Mademoiselle Rigolette is never short of that. It is her luxury, she is like a little duck; the moment that she is at leisure, she washes her floor and her hearth; and so every thing about her is so clean! You will see that ——"

"So Mr. Germain, having respect to the locality, was a good neighbour to Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Yes, sir: it would not be too much to say, that they were born for each other. So polite, so young, it was quite a pleasure to see them come down stairs together on Sundays, the only holiday the poor things had. She, prettily set off in a smart little bonnet, and a nice neat gown at twenty-five sous the yard, which became her like a little queen; and he dressed like a gentleman."

"And Mr. Germain has not seen Mademoiselle Rigolette since he left this house?"

"No, sir, unless he has done so on Sundays; for on other days Mademoiselle Rigolette has no time to think of sweethearting, I assure you. She gets up at five or six o'clock in the morning, and works from that time until ten, and sometimes even eleven o'clock at night; she never leaves her room, except in the morning, to buy provisions for herself and her two birds; and the three of them put together don't eat much. What do they need? A penn'orth of milk, a little bread, a morsel of mutton, salad, bird-seed, and clear fresh water. They talk and sing so merrily, the little girl and her two birds, that it does one's heart good to hear them. And then, she is kind and charitable, too, as far as her means go—that is to say, she bestows her time and her attentions, for, in working twelve hours a day, she is barely able to support herself. Ah! those poor wretches in the attics, whom Mr. Bras Rouge will turn into the streets in a day or two at the very farthest, Mademoiselle Rigolette and Mr. Germain, many and many a night, have watched over those poor creatures and their children!"

"There is an unfortunate family here, then?"

"Unfortunate, sir? Great heaven! they are, indeed, unfortunate. Five young children, the mother confined to her bed, the grandmother an idiot; and to support all these, only the labour of a poor man, who can scarcely get bread for them all, though he is an excellent workman, and

toils from morning till night, like a slave. Three hours sleep in twenty-four—that is all that he will allow himself: and that sleep, such as it is, often broken by the cries of his hungry children, by the groans of his poor, sick wife, tossing in pain on her miserable straw bed, or by the idiotic screams of the famishing, bed-ridden grandmother, who will sometimes howl like a wolf, from sheer hunger, for she has not the sense to express her sufferings in any other way; and when she is very hungry, her howls and screams are frightful."

"Horrible!" said Rodolph, deeply moved. "And does no one succour these poor creatures?"

"Ah, sir! we do as much for them as poor people can. Since the commandant has given me his twelve francs a month, for looking after his room, I have boiled my pot once a week, and then these poor creatures always have some soup. Mademoiselle Rigolette often sits up all night, at the expense of rest and candles, to make bits of clothes for the poor children, out of her ends and cuttings of stuff. Then poor Mr. Germain, though he was far from too well off, often pretended to receive some bottles of wine from his friends, and Morel—that is the poor workman's name—used to take a good drink or two, which warmed his heart, and gave him strength to go to work again."

"And did the dentist do nothing for these poor creatures?"

"Mr. Bradamanti?" said the porter. "He cured my rheumatics, it is true, and for that I venerate him; but, since that day, I said to my wife: 'Hum! hum! Did I not tell you, Anastasia?"

"Exactly; that is what you said to me."

"Well, and what did he do for the poor creatures in the attics?"

"I'll tell you, sir. When we spoke to Mr. Bradamanti about the poverty and destitution of the poor Morels, on occasion of his complaining of the screams of the old idiot when she was enraged with hunger one night, he said to me: 'Since they are so much distressed, if they have any teeth that want drawing, I will not even make them pay for the sixth.'"

"Decidedly, Madame Pipelet," said Rodolph, "I have a very bad opinion of that man. And the female pawnbroker, has she been more charitable?"

"Hum! After the fashion of Mr. Bradamanti," said the porteress. "She has lent them money on their wretched goods. All has passed into her hands, even to the last mattress; and they never had but two."

"And now she aids them no further!"

"Mother Burette!" Bless you, she is as great a brute in her way as her lover is in his; for, between you and I," added the porteress, "Mr. Bras Rouge and Mother Burette are—hum! hum!" And the old woman gave a knowing wink of the eye, and a significant shake of the head.

"Indeed!" said Rodolph.

"Oh! upon my life, I think so. The summers are as hot at St. Martin as elsewhere, are they not, my old darling?"

Mr. Pipelet's sole reply was a melancholy shake of the head, which gave a corresponding motion to his immense hat.

As for Madame Pipelet, since she had shown some charitable feeling for the unhappy family, she had become somewhat less repulsive in the eyes of Rodolph, who now asked: 'And what is poor Morel's business?"

"A maker of imitation jewellery. He works by the piece; but that sort of work is so cheaply got up now; and, after all, a man is only a man, he can do no more than he can, can he? And when he has to give a crust to a family of seven people, besides himself, he has a tough job of it! Yet his eldest girl helps him all she can—though that is but very, very little. About eighteen, and so very handsome, too. She is servant to a miserly old fellow, one Mr. Jacques Ferrand, a notary; rich enough, they say, to buy all Paris."

"Mr. Jacques Ferrand!" exclaimed Rodolph, amazed at this new coincidence; for it was from this notary, or at least from his housekeeper, that he was to expect the information relative to La Goualeuse. Mr. Jacques Ferrand, who lives in the Rue du Sentier?" inquired he.

"The same, sir; do you know him?"

"He is notary of the house of business to which I belong."

"Ah! then you must know all about his miserly, money-grubbing ways. But, let us be just to the man. He is extremely charitable and devout. He goes every Sunday to mass and vespers, keeps the fasts, and goes regularly to confession; if he feasts, he feasts only with the priests, eating blessed bread, and drinking holy water. A saint of a man, that, eh? but with a heart like iron, and he is just as avaricious and harsh towards others, as he is towards himself. It is about eighteen months since that poor Louisa, daughter of the sick lodger, went to live with him. She is a lamb in mildness, and a very horse at hard work. She does everything in that house, and has only eighteen francs wages, neither more nor less. She keeps six francs a month to support herself, and all the rest she gives to her father. It is something, that; but what is it when there are seven mouths to feed!"

"But what does the father earn, if he is so very industrious?"

"Industrious! The poor fellow works too hard, and far beyond his strength. He is the soberest, steadiest of men, and wishes the long days were doubly long, that he might earn sufficient bread to satisfy the cravings of his starving children."

"His labour must be very ill paid, then?"

"Why, the poor fellow was confined to his bed for three months, which is the cause of his being thrown back so much. His wife ruined her own health in nursing him, and she is now fast dying. For these three months past he has been obliged to live upon the wages of poor Louisa, and what they could borrow on pledges from Mother Burette, and some trifling sums that have been lent him by the man for whom he works. But, eight people! That's what I always think of. And if you were to see the hole they live in! But I must not speak of that, sir, for our dinner is ready now, and only to talk about that filthy garret would turn my stomach. Happily, Mr. Bras Rouge is going to turn them out of the house. When I say happily, I do not say it out of any ill-will to the poor creatures, I can assure you. But as these Morels are so very wretched, and we can do nothing to prevent it, it is as well that they should be wretched elsewhere; for, I assure you, sir, it is quite heart-breaking to us."

"But, if turned out of here, where are they to go?"

"That I really don't know."

DOCTOR POLIDORI.

"And how much can this poor man earn a day?"

"If he were not obliged to attend on his mother, his wife, and the children, he could earn four or five francs, working so hard as he does; but as he loses three-fourths of his time in household work, it is doing well if he makes forty sous."

"That is little, indeed, poor creatures!"

"Yes, it is easy to say poor creatures! But there are so many poor creatures, that as one cannot help them all, it is no use worrying ourselves about it, is it Alfred? Ah! talking of consolation, you have not tasted your cassia."

"Why, to say the truth Madame Pipelet, from what you have told me, I don't care to touch it; so you and Mr. Pipelet must be good enough to drink it to my health."

"You are very kind, sir; but would you like to go up and look at the room?"

"If you please; and if I like it, I will give you a deposit."

The porter, followed by Rodolph, left the lodge, and went up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOUR STORIES.

The damp and dark staircase seemed doubly miserable on this gloomy winter's day. The entrance to each of the apartments of this house had, so to speak, a physiognomy peculiar to itself. Thus, the door which led to the dwelling of the commandant was freshly painted of a brown colour, veined in imitation of wainscot; a gilt button shone on the lock, and a handsome bell-rope, with a red silk tassel, was in striking contrast with the sordid state of the walls.

The door of the second story, that was inhabited by the fortune-teller and money-lender, presented a more singular aspect. A stuffed owl, a bird especially cabalistic and symbolical, was nailed over the room-door by the legs and wings; and a little wicket of very strong iron lattice-work, served to enable the residents to examine their visitors previous to letting them in.

The dwelling of the Italian charlatan, who was suspected of pursuing frightful avocations, was also distinguished by the strangeness of the entrance. His name was done in horses' teeth encrusted upon a tablet of black wood, that was fastened over the doorway; and the bell-rope, instead of the usual termination of a hare's foot, or deer's foot, had the dried fore-arm of an ape! This withered limb, with its articulated fingers and the perfect nails, had something of the horrible in its appearance. One might have taken it for the hand of a child!

As Rodolph passed by this strangely-decorated door, so indicative of his worst suspicions, he imagined that he heard the sound of smothered sobs; and then, all at once, arose an agonised, convulsive, and horrible cry, that seemed to proceed from the inmost soul of some wretched sufferer. Rodolph shuddered: then, quicker than thought, he rushed to the door, and pulled the bell violently.

"What ails you, sir?" inquired the astonished porter.

"That cry!" said Rodolph; "did you not hear it?"

"Yes, sir, I heard it; no doubt it is one of Mr. Cæsar's patients having a tooth drawn—or perhaps two."

This explanation, though a probable one, did not satisfy Rodolph as to the scream which had so fearfully disturbed the portentous silence of this gloomy abode. He had rung the bell violently; yet no one came to answer him. He could hear several doors shut in succession; and through a glass bull's-eye that was above the door, Rodolph confusedly saw a haggard, cadaverous, and horridly pale countenance. A perfect forest of wild, red hair crowned that hideous visage, the other extremity of which was ornamented by a long beard of the same colour. This hideous face disappeared in an instant. Rodolph felt completely petrified; for, brief as had been the vision, he could not but imagine that he recognised the man's features. Those green eyes, that shone so brightly beneath the wild brows—that livid and extreme paleness—that slender and prominent nose, whose nostrils, so strongly dilated, allowed the interior of the nose to be seen—reminded him in a most striking manner of a certain Polidori, whose name had been so unceremoniously used by Murphy in his conversation with the Baron de Graün. Although Rodolph had not seen Polidori for the last sixteen or seventeen years, he had a thousand reasons for not forgetting him; the only thing that contradicted his remembrance, was, that the priest, whom he fancied he saw in the person of this fair-skinned and red-haired quack, was extremely dark. That Rodolph experienced no surprise (supposing his conjectures correct as to the identity) at finding a man whose learning, great talent, and intelligence, he knew, fallen to such a state of degradation—if not infamy—was because he also knew, that these rare and noble gifts were allied to so much perversity, such wild, unlicensed passions, desires so corrupt, and, beyond all, an affected scorn and contempt of the world, which might induce this man, when overtaken by want, to prefer degraded and dishonourable modes of subsistence, enjoying the devilish feeling of satisfaction, that he was hiding beneath his ignoble pursuits the precious treasures of a highly-gifted mind. Although he had last seen Polidori in the prime of life, and although he must be about the same age as the charlatan, there was still between the two persons certain differences so remarkable, that Rodolph remained in great doubt as to whether they were one and the same person. At length, turning to Pipelet, he inquired: "Has Mr. Bradamanti long resided in this house?"

"About a year, sir; now I recollect, he came in the January of last year. He is a very exact lodger; he cured my dreadful rheumatism."

"Madame Pipelet tells me that there are certain horrible reports about him."

"She has told you of them?"

"Oh, make yourself quite easy; I am very prudent."

"Well, sir, if you will believe me, I don't think there is the least truth in these reports—and I never will believe it—I trust I have too much modesty and good sense to do anything of the kind," rejoined Pipelet, blushing to the very brim of his immense hat, and preceding his new lodger to the second floor.

More than ever resolved to clear up his doubts—feeling that the presence of Polidori in the same house might greatly interfere with his projects, and experiencing a growing inclination to put the worst interpretation on the horrible cry that he had heard—Rodolph followed the porter to the upper story, to the apartment that he wished to engage.

The lodgings of Mademoiselle Rigolette, next-door neighbour to the chamber for which Rodolph was in treaty, was easily recognised, thanks to a charming gallantry of the painter who has been described as the mortal foe of Mr. Pipelet. Half-a-dozen chubby little Cupids, very freely and spiritedly painted in the style of Watteau, were grouped about a panel. One held a thimble, another a pair of scissors, another a flat-iron, and another a mirror; and, in the midst of them, in pink letters on a sky-blue ground, was "Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker;" the whole being surrounded by a garland of flowers, which stood out in admirable relief from the dark green colour of the door. This little panel was pretty in itself, and had all the prettier effect from its strong contrast with the squalid ugliness of the staircase.

At the risk of opening afresh the wounds of Alfred, Rodolph said, pointing to the door of Mademoiselle Rigolette: "That, I suppose, is the work of Mr. Cabrion?"

"Yes, sir; he took the liberty of spoiling the painting of the door, by daubing it over with those fat, indecent brats, stark naked, which he called his Loves. But for the entreaties of Mademoiselle Rigolette, and the weakness of Mr. Bras Rouge, I would have scratched all that out, as I also would this palette, filled with horrid-looking monsters, amongst whom you may detect their equally abominable master—you can know by his sugar-loaf hat."

And there, in fact, on the door of the room Rodolph was about to engage, might be seen a palette surrounded by all sorts of odd, strange-looking figures, the witty conceit of which might have done honour to a Callot. Rodolph followed the porter into a tolerable-sized room, which communicated with a small closet, and lighted by two windows which opened upon the Rue du Temple. Some wild fancies, which had been painted on the same door, had been scrupulously respected by Mr. Germain. Rodolph had many reasons for wishing to occupy this apartment; therefore, modestly placing two francs in the hand of the porter, he said to him: "This apartment exactly suits me; here is the deposit. I will send my furniture in to-morrow. But let me beg of you not to efface that palette. It is so very droll. Don't you think so?"

"Droll!" groaned poor Pipelet, raising his large hat from his eyes, and placing his hand on his forehead: "Ah, sir! I have been haunted by those monsters in my dreams, led on by Cabrion, till I have awoke in a cold sweat, with my head going round like a wheel."

"Well, let us say no more about it. But tell me, have I any need to see your Mr. Bras Rouge about the hiring of this apartment?"

"Oh, no, sir; he seldom comes here, except on his business, whatever that is, with Mother Burette. I always engage with the lodgers. I will only further trouble you for your name?"

"Rodolph."

"Rodolph what?"

"Plain Rodolph, Mr. Pipelet."

"Oh, very well, sir; I did not ask from idle curiosity—names and inclinations are free."

"Tell me, Mr. Pipelet, cannot I call to-morrow upon poor Morel, as a next neighbour, to ask if I can be of any use to him, since my predecessor, Mr. Germain, was so good to him?"

"Oh, yes, sir, that can be done; it is true that it will not be of much use to him, as he is to be turned out, but still it will sooth his mind."

Then, as if struck with a sudden thought, Mr. Pipelet, looking knowingly at his new lodger, said: "I understand, I understand; it is a beginning, so that you can also call by-and-by, with a good grace, upon the little dressmaker, your neighbour!"

"Oh! I count upon that, I assure you."

"There is no harm in that, sir—it is the custom; and I am quite sure Mademoiselle Rigolette will have heard us in the room, and that she is on hot coals to see us go down again. I will make a noise with the key, and if you look behind, you will see her watching us, I lay my life." And, in fact, Rodolph perceived that the door, which was so handsomely decorated in the style of Watteau, was on the jar, and, through the narrow opening he could see a little rosy nose and a large staring black eye; but, as he stopped to examine them more closely, the door suddenly clapped to. "Did I not tell you, sir, that she was watching us?" Then he added: "Just excuse me, one moment, while I step into my warehouse."

"Where is that?"

"At the top of that ladder, is the landing upon which opens the door of Morel's garret, and behind some rubbish is a little and very dark cavity, where I keep my leather, from which I can see and hear as if I were in their room. It is not, God knows, that I wish to act the spy upon them—on the contrary. But pray excuse me for a minute or two, sir, while I get my leather. If you will be good enough to step down stairs, I will rejoin you."

And so saying, Mr. Pipelet began to make the ascent of the crazy ladder, an undertaking which was somewhat perilous at his years.

Rodolph threw a last glance at the door of Mademoiselle Rigolette, as he reflected that that young girl, the companion of poor La Goualeuse, was doubtless acquainted with the retreat of the son of the Schoolmaster. As he gazed, he heard some one in the lower story come out of the apartment of the charlatan; he distinguished the light step of a female, and the rustle of a silk dress. He stopped for an instant, lest he should intrude. When he heard no more, he went down. Arrived at the second floor, he saw and picked up a handkerchief that lay upon the lowest stair—doubtless it belonged to the female who had just gone down. He took it to one of the narrow staircase windows; it was magnificently trimmed with costly lace, and embroidered in one of the corners were the initials L. N., surmounted with a ducal coronet. The handkerchief was literally drenched with tears. Rodolph's first impulse was to follow the person from whose hand this mute evidence of grief had fallen, with the intention of restoring it; but reflecting that such a step might be taken for impertinent curiosity, he determined to keep it as the first link in the chain of a mysterious adventure, in which he had found himself suddenly and involuntarily engaged, and of which he foretold a painful termination. On arriving at the porter's lodge, he said to Madame Pipelet: "Did not a female come down stairs just now?"

"No, sir, she is a very fine *lady*, tall and slender, and wrapped in a large black veil. She came from the apartment of Mr. Bradamanti. Little Tortillard went for a coach, in which the lady has just gone away. But what astonished me, was to see that little beggar get up behind the coach; I dare say though it was to see where the lady goes to, for he is as mischievous as a

COUNTESS SARAH MACGREGOR.

magpie, and as nimble as a squirrel, for all his lame foot."

"So, then," thought Rodolph, "the charlatan will most likely discover this lady's name and address, since doubtless it is he who has ordered Tortillard to follow her."

"Well, sir," said the porteress, "does the room suit you?"

"Excellently! I have paid a deposit — to-morrow I will send in my furniture."

"May God bless you for coming by our door, sir; we shall have one good lodger the more."

"I hope so, Madame Pipelet. I think we understand each other about the management of my little domestic affairs. I shall superintend the removal of my goods to-morrow; till then, farewell. And Rodolph left the lodge.

The results of his visit to the house of the Rue du Temple were sufficiently important, alike as to the solution of the mystery that he wished to penetrate, and as to the noble curiosity with which he found out every occasion of doing good, and of preventing evil. On reflection, he thought he had achieved the following results. First, that Mademoiselle Rigolette *must* be acquainted with the residence of François Germain, the son of the Schoolmaster. Secondly, a young woman, who, according to some appearances, might unfortunately be the Marquise d'Harville, had made, for the morrow, an appointment with the commandant, which might ruin her for ever; and, for a thousand reasons, Rodolph took the most lively interest in his friend d'Harville, whose peace and honour seemed so cruelly compromised. An honest and laborious artizan, crushed down by the most frightful misery, was about to be turned into the street with his family, by Bras Rouge. Further, Rodolph had involuntarily come upon some traces of an adventure in which the charlatan Cæsar Bradamanti (perhaps the infamous Polidori), and some lady of rank and fashion were the chief actors. And finally, La Chouette, recently emerged from the hospital, to which she had been taken after the scene in the Allée des Veuves, had some very suspicious connections with Mother Burette, fortune-teller and money-lender, who occupied the second floor of this house.

Having carefully noted these points of information, Rodolph returned to his house in the Rue du Plumet, deferring to the following day his visit to the notary, Jacques Ferrand. That same evening, as we have seen, Rodolph was to be at the ball at the * * * Embassy.

Before following our hero upon this new excursion, let us cast a retrospective glance upon Tom and Sarah—important personages in the development of this story.

CHAPTER XXV.

TOM AND SARAH.

Sarah Seyton, at this time widow of the Count Macgregor, and thirty-seven or thirty-eight years of age, belonged to an excellent Scotch family; her father being a country gentleman by habits and residence, and a baronet by rank. Of rare beauty, Sarah, left an orphan at seventeen years of age, had quitted Scotland in the company of her brother, Tom Seyton of Halsbury. The absurd predictions of an ignorant and superstitious old Highland nurse, had excited, almost to madness, the two leading vices of Sarah's mind—pride and ambition; those predictions having, with an incredible obstinacy and confidence, promised her the very highest destinies; in fact, sovereign rank. The young Scotch lady, proud and ambitious in her very nature, had readily yielded herself up to a full belief in the predictions of her nurse; and she constantly repeated, in order to bear out and corroborate her own ambitious dream, that a fortune-teller, under similar circumstances, had promised a crown to the handsome and excellent Josephine, who afterwards sat on the throne of France—and who was as much a queen, by her graces and kindness of heart, as others have been by their grandeur and majesty.

Strange to say, Tom Seyton, fully as superstitious as his sister, encouraged her wild hopes, and resolved to consecrate his life to realising those dreams, at least as dazzling as they were deceptive. However, the brother and sister were not sufficiently blinded to take the prediction of the Highland nurse in its precise and literal sense, and to look absolutely for a throne of the first order, in splendid disdain of second-rate royalty. No; provided that a sovereign crown should one day encircle the fair brow of Sarah, the proud couple were willing to shut their eyes upon the actual possessions and power of that crown. Aided by the *Almanach de Gotha*, for the year of grace, 1819, Tom Seyton, on leaving Scotland, arranged a sort of synoptical table of all the unmarried kings and sovereign highnesses of Europe, placing them in the order of their age.

Although the ambition of the brother and sister was very absurd, it was at least free from all shameful intentions. Tom was fully prepared to aid his sister in matrimonially entangling any crown-bearer whomsoever; he was perfectly willing to participate with her in all the schemes and intrigues that might be useful towards the success of her endeavour to become the wife of a sovereign, however humble in possessions and power; but he would far rather have killed the sister whom he so devotedly loved, than he would have seen her become the mistress of a prince, even with the certainty of a subsequent marriage in reparation.

The matrimonial inventory drawn up by Tom, with the aid of the *Almanach de Gotha*, had a very satisfactory aspect. The Germanic confederation, especially, furnished a numerous contingency of young presumptive sovereigns. Tom was not ignorant of the German species of marriage called *left-handed;* to which, as being legitimate to a certain extent, he would, as a last resource, have resigned his sister. It was resolved between them, therefore, that Germany should be the first scene of their endeavours to catch a royal spouse.

If the project appears improbable, such hopes absurd, let us remark, that a frenzied ambition, exaggerated still farther by a superstitious credulity, rarely piques itself upon the especial reasonableness of its views—and, in truth, is rarely tempted but towards the impossible; and, moreover, remembering certain contemporaneous occurrences, from august and respectable *morganatic*, or left-handed marriages, between sovereigns and subjects, down to the loving elopement of Miss Penelope Smith and the Prince of Capua, one cannot deny the possibility of success to the matrimonial imaginings of Tom and Sarah. Let us add, that the latter, to rare beauty and a singular aptitude of acquiring various accomplishments, added a seductiveness all the more dangerous, because she possessed a mind

unbending and calculating, a disposition cunning and selfish, a deep hypocrisy, a stubborn and despotic will—all hidden under the specious gloss of a generous, warm, and impassioned nature. Physically, her organisation was as deceptive as it was morally. Her large, black eyes—which, by turns, languished and beamed with beauty beneath their ebon lashes—could feign to admiration all the kindling fires of voluptuousness. And yet, the burning impulses of love beat not in her frozen bosom; never could a surprise of either the heart or the senses disturb the stern and pitiless schemes of this intriguing, egotistical, and ambitious girl. On reaching the continent, she, in accordance with the advice of her brother, made a short stay in Paris, to prepare for the commencement of her conjugal and regal enterprises elsewhere, by rubbing off the hardness of style and manner of her native country, by mingling with a society full of elegance, refinement, and the freedom of perfect taste. Sarah readily got access to the very highest circles, favoured as she was both by powerful letters of recommendation, and by the kind patronage of the English ambassadress, and the old Marquis d'Harville, who had known in England the father of Tom and Sarah.

False, cold, and designing people have a perfectly marvellous facility in accommodating their language to company, habits, and sentiments the most diametrically opposed to their true character. With such people all is surface, varnish, rind, mere appearance — once truly judged, they are lost; and thus the sort of self-protective instinct with which they are endowed, renders them eminently well calculated to assume moral disguises. They *dress* and *look* their assumed characters, with all the talent of the most practised comedian. It was thus that, in six months after her arrival in Paris, Sarah was qualified to compete with the most Parisian of Parisian ladies, for the piquant gracefulness of her wit, for the skilful adaptation of her coquetry to time, place, persons, and for the exciting and winning simplicity of her at once chaste and impassioned glance. Tom, seeing that his sister was now sufficiently *armed*, set out with her for Germany, abundantly provided with excellent letters of recommendation. The first state of the Germanic Confederation upon the itinerary arranged by Tom and Sarah, was the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein, thus styled in the diplomatic and infallible *Almanach de Gotha*, for the year 1819 :—

"*Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe, and their Families.*

"GEROLSTEIN.

"*Grand Duke:* Maximilian-Rodolph, born 10th of December, 1764; succeeded his father, Charles-Frederick-Rodolph, 21st of April, 1785. Widower, January 1808, by decease of his wife Louisa-Amelia, daughter of John-Augustus, Prince of Burglen.

"*Son:* Gustavus Rodolph, born 17th of April, 1803.

"*Mother:* Dowager Grand Duchess Judith; widow of the Grand Duke Charles-Frederic-Adolphus, 21st April, 1785."

Seyton, with very good judgment, had given precedence on his list to the youngest of the princes among whom he wished to find a brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth is far more easily seduced than mature age. Moreover, Sarah and Tom were especially recommended to the reigning Duke of Gerolstein by the old Marquis d'Harville, who, like every one else, was greatly prejudiced in favour of Sarah, whose beauty, grace, and charming manners, he could not sufficiently admire.

It is needless to say, that the presumptive heir to the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein was Gustavus-Rodolph, who, at the period at which Tom and Sarah were presented at the court of his father, was barely eighteen years of age. The arrival of the young and lovely Scotch lady was quite an event in this little German court—so calm, so simple, and, we may say, so patriarchal in its habits. The grand duke, a most admirable man, governed his state at once with wise firmness and paternal kindness; nothing, whether materially or morally, could exceed the happiness of this little state; its grave, sober, pious, and laborious population, presented the ideal type of the German character in its brightest and noblest aspect. These excellent people enjoyed so profound a happiness, they were so completely satisfied with their condition, that the enlightened solicitude of their grand duke had experienced little trouble in preserving them from that mania of constitutional innovations which was so contagious in less fortunate and less wisely governed states. As regarded modern discoveries of a different order, as regarded practical ideas calculated to have a salutary influence upon the welfare and the morality of his people, the grand duke was incessant in his inquiries after and in his adoption of them; indeed, the principal duty of his ministers at the various courts of Europe may be said to have been that of keeping their sovereign constantly fully informed of the progress of science as it bears upon public and practical utility. We have stated that the grand duke felt equal affection and gratitude for the Marquis d'Harville, who, in 1815, had rendered him immense services; and, consequently, owing to the recommendation of the Marquis d'Harville, Tom and Sarah were received at the court of Gerolstein with singular kindness and distinction. A fortnight after her arrival here, the young Scotch lady, endowed with a deep spirit of observation, had easily penetrated the firm, honourable and frank character of the grand duke. He appeared to be so passionately attached to his son, Gustavus-Rodolph, that for a brief instant Sarah had even imagined that the duke would consent to his son forming a *més-alliance*, rather than see that beloved son eternally unhappy. But she soon corrected this false judgment; she soon perceived that the firm and upright duke, tender father though he was, would never depart from certain fixed and important principles—from certain ideas upon the duties of princes. His attachment to these principles and duties did not arise from mere pride, but from conscience, reason, and dignity. But a man of his energetic stamp, the kinder and more affectionate by as much as he is the more firm and resolute, never concedes any portion of what concerns his conscience, his reason, and his dignity.

Sarah, seeing the vast difficulty to be apprehended from the peculiarity of the character of the reigning duke, was upon the point of abandoning her matrimonial design upon his only son and heir to his sovereignty; but she reflected that, to compensate for this peculiarity in the character of the father, the young prince Rodolph was very young, and that he was said to be extremely kind, gentle, of a thoughtful and timid turn, and she came to the conclusion

[Rodolph's Reception at the * * * Embassy.]

that, having these characteristics ascribed to him by the subjects of his father, he must in reality be both weak and irresolute. She, consequently, persevered in her hopes, and persisted in her projects.

The generalship of both Tom and Sarah at this conjuncture was of a masterly character. The young girl, on her part, succeeded in conciliating the good feelings of the whole court, and more especially of those personages who might have been jealous or envious of her advantages; and she did this as only one possessing an exquisite talent for deception could have dreamed of attempting it; she caused all around her to forget her grace and beauty by veiling them beneath an exquisitely skilful personation of simplicity and humility. She soon became the idol not only of the duke, but also of his mother, the dowager grand duchess Judith, who, though ninety years of age, was passionately fond of having herself surrounded by youth, beauty, and intelligence.

Sarah and her brother now often talked of the necessity for their departure, but the sovereign of Gerolstein would never consent to it; and that he might completely attach the two to him, he pressed on Sir Thomas Seyton the acceptance of the vacant post of "first equerry," and entreated that Sarah should not quit the grand duchess Judith, as she could not do without her. After many hesitations and objections, that were combatted by as many urgings and influences, Tom and Sarah accepted the brilliant offers that were made to them, and established themselves at the court of Gerolstein, at which they had been presented but two months before.

Sarah, who was an accomplished musician, knowing the taste of the dowager grand duchess for the old masters, and, among them, for Gluck, procured the works of that master, and com-

pleted the fascinations of the aged princess by her inexhaustible complaisance and the admirable ability with which she sang those old airs, at once simple, beautiful, and expressive. Tom, on his part, was able to render very real services in the department to which the grand duke had appointed him. He was a good judge of horses; and he possessed great method, discretion, and firmness. By dint of exerting these qualities, he speedily remodelled and brought about a complete reform in the stable department of the grand duke, which, from neglect, had been reduced to a state of the utmost disorder and inefficiency.

The brother and sister, acting thus skilfully, were soon equally honoured and in request by all of this court; the approval and affection of the sovereign were, in this case, sincerely imitated by the courtiers. Sarah was too conscious of the value to her projects of every support that she could command for them, to fail in employing to the utmost her seductive skill for the making of friends and partisans. Her hypocrisy, dressed up in the most attractive forms, readily deceived the majority of these discreet and honest Germans, and the extreme partiality of the grand duke was very soon consecrated by the general favour.

Thus then were the ambitious brother and sister completely and with distinction established at the court of the grand duke, before a word had been said about the young prince Rodolph. By a fortunate chance, only a few days previous to the arrival of Sarah, the young prince had left the court for the purpose of inspecting some troops, accompanied by an aid-de-camp and the faithful Murphy. This absence, doubly favourable to the views of Sarah, allowed her at her leisure to arrange the meshes of the net-matrimonial, without being interrupted by the presence of the young prince, whose too evident admiration might probably have awakened the fears of the conscientious grand duke. On the contrary, in the absence of his son, he, unfortunately, never reflected that he was admitting to his intimacy a young girl of rare and exquisite beauty, and of a fascinating wit, as Rodolph could not fail to discover, in his daily intercourse with her.

Sarah remained perfectly insensible to this reception, so touchingly generous—to this noble confidence, which thus introduced her to the bosom of this sovereign family. Neither this young girl nor her brother shrunk for a moment from their evil designs; they wilfully proceeded to sow perplexity and grief in this court and family, previously so peaceful and happy; and they coldly, as skilfully, calculated the probable results of the cruel differences which they were about to produce between a father and son hitherto so tenderly united.

* * *

It may here be necessary to say a few words about the early years of Rodolph. During his infancy, he had been of very delicate constitution; and his father reasoned thereon in this somewhat strange manner. "English country gentlemen are, generally speaking, remarkable for their robust health. This vast advantage is, in a great measure, owing to their physical training; simple, rough, and rural, it develops all their vigour. Rodolph must leave the hands of women, who are far better qualified to soothe sickness than to promote health. His constitution is delicate; perhaps by accustoming this youth to live, with a few exceptions, like the son of an English farmer, I shall strengthen his constitution."

The grand duke, having arrived at this conclusion, sent to England for a man able and worthy to superintend this sort of physical training; and, in the end, this important trust was confided to Sir Walter Murphy, an athletic specimen of a country gentleman of the county of York. The direction which he gave to the mind and body of the young prince admirably justified the choice, and answered the views of the grand duke.

For several years, Murphy and his pupil inhabited a beautiful farm-house, situated amidst fields and woods, in a most picturesque and healthy part of the country, a few leagues distant from the capital of Gerolstein. Rodolph, freed from the trammels of etiquette, and occupied, with Murphy, in agricultural labours proportioned to his years, lived the sober, manly, and healthy life of the country, having for his pleasure and amusement such exercises as wrestling, boxing, hunting, and riding.

In the midst of the pure air of the fields, the woods, and the mountains, the young prince seemed to undergo a complete transformation, and he grew up as vigorous as a young oak; his somewhat unhealthy paleness gave place to the ruddy glow of health; always ardent and active, he came forth victorious from the severest fatigues; skill energy, and courage supplying his deficiency in muscular strength, he was able, even with advantage, when only in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, to wrestle with young men his superiors in age.

His scientific education necessarily suffered from the preference that was thus given to his physical training, and Rodolph knew but little; but the grand duke wisely thought that, fairly to demand much from the mind, it should be supported by a strong physical organization; then, though tardily enriched by education, the intellectual faculties would promptly develop themselves.

The good Walter Murphy was by no means a man of learning, and could only give Rodolph some elementary instruction; but no one could be better qualified than he was to imbue the mind and heart of his pupil with the perception and love of all that is just, honourable, and generous, and with a horror and contempt of all that is mean, villainous, and contemptible. These energetic admirations and antipathies became deeply and permanently rooted in the soul of Rodolph. Subsequently, indeed, these principles were violently shaken by the tempests of the passions; but they were never eradicated from his heart. The lightning blasts, breaks, and rends the tree, however deeply planted; but the living sap still nurtures its hidden roots, and from the seemingly withered trunk spring forth a thousand fresh, green, and vigorous branches.

Murphy, then, gave to Rodolph, if we may venture to use the phrase, health of body and health of mind; he rendered him robust, active, and daring, with a love for all that is good and laudable, and a hatred for all that is wicked and bad. Having thus admirably fulfilled the important trust committed to him, the worthy Murphy, called into England by important private affairs, was for some time absent from Germany, to the great grief of Rodolph, who had become warmly and deeply attached to him.

Assured as to the bodily health of his beloved

son, the grand duke at this period began to devote serious attention to the culture of the young Rodolph's mind. A certain Doctor Cæsar Polidori—a renowned philologist, a distinguished medical man, a learned historian, and a philosopher conversant with the study of the exact and physical sciences—was now charged with the task of cultivating the rich but virgin soil that had been so perfectly prepared by Murphy. This time, the choice of the grand duke was most unfortunate; or, rather, his religious feelings were most cruelly deceived by the person who introduced the doctor to him, and caused *him* to accept Polidori as the preceptor of the young prince. Impious, knavish, full of art and trickery, disguising the most perilous immorality beneath an austere and pious exterior, possessing a profound knowledge of mankind, but only on their evil side—the disgraceful passions of humanity—Doctor Polidori was the most detestable Mentor that could have been entrusted with the education of a young man.

Rodolph, abandoning with extreme regret the animated, hardy, and independent life that he had led with Murphy, to grow pale with the book-studies for which he had as yet acquired no taste, and to be fettered with the ceremonials of his father's court, at once conceived a deep aversion for his new tutor. This could scarcely be otherwise.

On quitting his pupil, the poor squire had well compared him to a young wild colt, full of fire and gracefulness, that is taken from his native fields, in which he sported in joyful liberty, to be subjected to the bridle and spur, and to be taught to moderate and economise the strength and speed which hitherto he had only employed in leaping and galloping at his own pleasure and for his own diversion.

Rodolph, at the very outset, declared to Polidori, that he felt no relish for study, that it was above all things necessary to him to exercise his legs and arms, to inhale the pure air of the fields, to track the woods and the mountains, and that a good gun and a good horse appeared to him to be far preferable to the finest books in the world.

The doctor was prepared for this antipathy, and was secretly delighted at it; for, although in another way, the hopes of this man were as ambitious as those of Sarah. Although the grand-duchy of Gerolstein was only a secondary state, Polidori hoped to be to it, at some future day, another Richelieu, and to form young Rodolph for the part of the slothful prince. But desirous, above all things, to render himself acceptable to his pupil, and, by dint of condescension and obsequiousness to cause him to forget Murphy, he concealed from the grand duke the young prince's repugnance for study, and went so far as to boast of and praise his assiduity and great progress; whilst some questions and answers, concerted between the tutor and the pupil, but skilfully made to appear as quite casual, kept the grand duke, who was by no means learned, in a state of blind and easy confidence. By degrees, the aversion with which the doctor had in the outset inspired Rodolph, became exchanged, on the part of the young prince, for a cavalier familiarity, very unlike the real attachment he bore to Murphy. Gradually, Rodolph, though from very innocent causes, found himself closely leagued with Polidori in that species of partnership which unites two accomplices. Sooner or later, Rodolph must necessarily despise a man of the character and age of the doctor, who could shamelessly utter lies to excuse the idleness of his pupil. This Polidori knew; but he also knew, that if we do not at the very outset revolt with disgust from corrupted beings, we by degrees accustom ourselves to their often attractive spirit and conversation, and thus insensibly learn to hear, without either shame or indignation, their railleries and sarcasms upon what we formerly held in the deepest veneration. Besides, the doctor was far too shrewd a person openly to shock certain noble convictions that Rodolph owed to the instructions of Murphy. Having sufficiently ridiculed the rudeness and vulgarity of the pastimes of his pupil's early years, the doctor, half laying aside his mask of austerity, had greatly aroused the curiosity and heated the imagination of the young prince, by glowing and highly-coloured tales of the gallantries which had *illustrated* the reigns of Louis XIV., of the Regent, and especially of Louis XV., the heroes of Cæsar Polidori. He assured this unfortunate boy, who listened to him with fatal avidity, that pleasures, even when carried to excess, far from demoralising a happily endowed prince, frequently have the effect of rendering him merciful and generous, inasmuch as noble souls are never better disposed towards benevolence and affection, than when they are happy. Louis XV., the *well-beloved*, was an indisputable proof of this position. And then, argued the doctor, how many great men, of both ancient and modern times, have plunged deeply into the most refined epicureanism—from Alcibiades to Maurice of Saxony, from Antony to the great Condé, from Cæsar to Vendôme! Such language could not fail to make frightful impressions upon the virgin purity of a young and ardent mind: and then the doctor so eloquently translated to his pupil those odes of Horace, in which, with the most irresistible charm, that rare genius eulogizes the soft delights of a life wholly devoted to love and to the most exquisite sensualities.

In the midst of this well-regulated and virtuous court, accustomed, from the example of the sovereign, to simple pleasures and blameless diversions, Rodolph, instructed by Polidori, already dreamed of the wild, dissipated nights of Versailles, of the orgies of Choisy, of the fierce voluptuousness of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and also, occasionally, of some romantic loves, in contrast with these. Neither did the doctor fail to add his decided opinion that the military pretensions of a prince of the Germanic Confederation ought to begin, continue, and end with sending his contingent to the diet. However, the spirit of the time was not warlike. Delightfully and idly to spend his days among women and amidst the refinements of luxury, now to seek repose from the intoxication of sensual pleasures amidst the delightful attractions of the arts, occasionally to hunt, not as some barbarous Nimrod, but as an intelligent epicurean, enjoying those transient fatigues which so greatly heighten the charm of repose and indolence; such, according to the eloquent discourses of the doctor, was the only life to be led by a prince, who—summit of felicity!—could find a prime minister capable of bravely devoting himself to the heavy and wearisome burthen of state affairs.

Rodolph, abandoning himself to suppositions which were so far innocent that they were wholly based on fatal probabilities, proposed to himself, whenever it should please Providence to call away the grand duke, to devote himself to

the sort of life that Cæsar Polidori painted to him in such attractive and glowing colours, and to take for his prime minister the man whose learning and talent he admired, and whose blind complaisance he fully appreciated.

We need scarcely add, that the young prince kept profoundly secret the wretched hopes which had been excited in him. Knowing that the favourite heroes of the grand duke were Gustavus-Adolphus, Charles XII., and the Great Frederick (Maximilian-Rodolph had the honour of belonging to the royal house of Brandenburgh), Rodolph justly enough thought that his father, who had expressed so much admiration of these king-captains, ever booted, spurred, and mounted on their war-steeds, would look upon his son as being utterly lost, did he suppose him capable of wishing to displace the ultra-German decency and gravity of his court by the easy and licentious manners of the Regency.

A year—eighteen months thus passed away. At the end of that time, Murphy returned from England, and shed tears of joy as he once more embraced his pupil. After a few days, though he could not account to himself for a change which deeply grieved him, the excellent Murphy perceived that Rodolph was constrained in his manner towards him, and that his tone was almost bitterly ironical when he recalled to him his rural and sequestered life. Quite confident of the natural goodness of Rodolph's heart, the frank English squire felt himself warned, as if by instinct, that that heart had been for a moment perverted by the pernicious influence of Doctor Polidori, whom, no less instinctively, he detested, and upon whom he determined to keep a strict and jealous watch. The doctor, on his part, felt both annoyed and embarrassed by the return of Murphy, whose frankness, penetration, and sound good sense he held in awe, and it now became a principal object of his care to ruin the English gentleman in the opinion of Rodolph.

It was precisely when affairs were at this crisis, that Tom and Sarah were presented at the court of Gerolstein, and received with such extreme distinction. We have said that Rodolph, accompanied by Murphy, had been absent from the court some weeks, on a journey. During this absence, the doctor was by no means idle. It is said that intriguers recognise and understand each other by certain mysterious signs, which allow of their observing each other until their interest decides them in favour of an alliance or of a declared hostility.

In a few days after the establishment of Sarah and her brother at the court of the grand duke, Polidori was on very intimate terms with Seyton. With an odious cynicism, the vile doctor confessed to himself that there was a natural and almost involuntary affinity between the knavish and the wicked; and it was thus, without pretending to divine the cause, that he accounted for his being drawn towards Sarah and her brother, by a sympathy too lively to arise from aught but their having in contemplation some diabolical design. Some questions that were put to him by Tom Seyton, as to the character and former course of Rodolph—questions which to a man less artful and alert than the doctor, would not have seemed to have any especial objection—at once enlightened him as to the views and means of the brother and sister; only he did not give the young Scotch lady credit for joining so much honesty of purpose to so much ambition. The arrival of this lovely girl appeared to Polidori to be an actual godsend. Rodolph had his imagination already inflamed with numerous chimeras, and Sarah might become the sweet reality, who should replace so many delightful dreams. Without doubt, she would infallibly exercise an immense influence upon a heart subjected to the magic charm of first love. To direct and to cultivate this influence, and to turn it to his own benefit and the ruin of Murphy, the doctor at once laid his plan. Like a skilful man, he very distinctly gave the ambitious brother and sister to understand that it was with him that they had to do, he alone being responsible to the grand duke for the private conduct of the young prince. Sarah and her brother understood him at once, although they had not uttered a syllable to the doctor as to their secret designs. On the return of Rodolph and Murphy, all three combined for one common purpose, tacitly leagued against the squire, their most redoubtable enemy.

* * *

What is to be, will be. On his return, Rodolph saw Sarah daily, and became desperately enamoured of her. It was not long ere she confessed that his passion was returned, although she foresaw that their love would cause them great misery. He could never be happy; the distance that separated them was too great for that. Then she advised Rodolph to be profoundly silent as to his attachment, and to be most cautious in his demeanour towards her, lest he should arouse the suspicions of the grand duke, who would, doubtless, be inexorable, and deprive them of their sole consolation—the felicity of seeing each other daily. The young prince promised to be obedient to the lovely girl's wishes, and most cautiously to hide his love. The Scotch maid was too ambitious, too completely self-possessed to compromise herself, or betray her secret to the eyes of the court. Rodolph also felt the necessity of dissimulation, and he imitated the prudence of Sarah. The amorous secret was, consequently, carefully preserved for some time. When the brother and sister at length perceived that the frenzied passion of Rodolph had reached its height, and that his increasing infatuation, every day restrained with more and more difficulty, was on the point of bursting forth, they resolved to make their final effort. The character of the doctor authorizing a confidence in which, moreover, there was nothing contrary to morality, Seyton made to him the first overtures upon the necessity of the marriage of Rodolph and Sarah; otherwise, he added, with perfect sincerity, he and his sisiter would immediately leave Gerolstein. Sarah, Tom proceeded to say, returned the love of the prince, but she would infinitely prefer death to dishonour, and could only be his highness's wife, or never see him more.

These pretensions stupefied the doctor: he never suspected Sarah of being so audaciously ambitious. A marriage beset by so many difficulties and dangers appeared totally impossible to Polidori, and he frankly explained to Tom the reasons which would prevent the grand duke from ever consenting to such an union. Tom as frankly accepted these reasons, and admitted all their importance; but he proposed, as a middle course, by which all things could be reconciled, that the marriage, perfectly regular in every other respect, should be strictly secret, and remain so, until the decease of the grand duke. Sarah was the daughter of an ancient

and noble house; and precedents were not wanting for such an union. Seyton gave the prince eight days to decide upon his proposal. His sister, he said, could no longer endure the uncertainty which inflicted such cruel agony upon her; if it was necessary for her to renounce Rodolph, it was clearly the best way for her to endure the torture of parting without further delay.

Certain that he now could not deceive himself as to the views of Sarah, the doctor was extremely perplexed. There were three courses for him to pursue: inform the grand duke of his matrimonial conspiracy; open the eyes of Rodolph to the manœuvring of Tom and Sarah, or aid in bringing about the marriage. But, to inform the grand duke, was for ever and utterly to forfeit the goodwill of the heir to the crown; to enlighten Rodolph upon the interested views of Sarah, was to expose himself to be treated as every one is who endeavours to depreciate a woman in the eyes of her lover; and then, what a terrible blow would he deal to the heart or to the vanity of the young prince, to show him that it was chiefly his sovereign position that she sought to espouse! On the other hand, by lending his aid to bring about this marriage, Polidori would attach himself to Rodolph and Sarah, by the tie of a deep gratitude; or, at least by the complicity of a dangerous act. Doubtless, all might be discovered, and the doctor exposed to the anger of the grand duke; but the marriage would be concluded, the union would be binding, the storm would blow over, and the future sovereign of Gerolstein would be all the more closely bound to Polidori, from the latter having run the more danger in his service. After the most mature reflection, he therefore decided on aiding Sarah; but with a certain restriction, of which we shall speak hereafter.

The passion of Rodolph had now reached its utmost pitch of frenzy. Violently exasperated by constraint, and by the skilful seductions of Sarah, who pretended to suffer even more than he from the insurmountable obstacles that honour and duty opposed to their felicity—a few days more, and the young prince had betrayed himself.

Thus, when the doctor proposed to him the alternative of either never again seeing this intoxicating beauty, or of possessing her wholly and at once, by means of a private marriage, Rodolph embraced the wily priest, and called him his friend, his father, his saviour. Had the temple and the minister been at hand, the young prince would have married his charmer on the instant. The doctor, for his own good reasons, volunteered to undertake all the necessary arrangements. He found a minister and witnesses; and the union (of which all the formalities were carefully examined and verified by Seyton) was secretly celebrated during a brief absence of the grand duke at a conference of the Germanic Diet. The prediction of the Highland nurse was thus far realised—Sarah married the heir to a crown!

Without diminishing the ardour of his love, possession rendered Rodolph more guarded and more circumspect, and calmed that violence which had threatened to betray the secret of his passion for Sarah. The young couple, protected and advised by Seyton and the doctor, managed so well, and practised so much reserve towards each other, that they escaped all the prying eyes by which they were surrounded.

An event, impatiently expected by Sarah, speedily changed this calm into a tempest. She was about to become a mother. It was then that this woman displayed exigences as alarming as they were new to Rodolph. She declared to him, in a passion of hypocritical tears, that she could no longer support the constraint in which she lived, and which her pregnancy rendered doubly painful. In this extremity, she resolutely proposed to the young prince to confess all to his father, who, as well as the dowager grand duchess, showed more affection for Sarah than ever. No doubt, she added, he would, in the first instance, be very angry and indignant, yet he so tenderly and blindly loved his son, and he was so affectionately disposed towards her, that his paternal anger would by degrees subside, and she would at least take the rank to which she was entitled at the court of Gerolstein—a rank to which she might now be said to have a double claim, since she was about to give birth to a child which would be the presumptive heir to the crown. Rodolph was alarmed at this pretension; he knew the deep attachment of his father to him, but he also knew far better than Sarah did, the inflexibility of the grand duke's principles in all that concerned his princely duties; but to these objections Sarah pitilessly replied: "I am your wife, before God and men; in a short time it will be impossible for me any longer to conceal my situation; and I am unwilling to blush for that of which, on the contrary, I am proud, and which I have a right openly to avow."

Paternity had redoubled the tenderness of Rodolph for Sarah; and, divided between the desire to accede to her wishes, and the dread of his father's anger, he experienced the most bitter anguish. Seyton now took part with his sister. "The marriage is indissoluble," said he to his brother-in-law. The grand duke may exile you and your wife from his court, but nothing further; he loves you too much to do even that. He will prefer to tolerate that which he now cannot undo."

These arguments, just enough in themselves, did not suffice to calm the anxieties of Rodolph. In this state of affairs Seyton was ordered by the grand duke to visit certain of the Austrian breeding-studs. This mission, which he had no plea for declining, would, at the most, occupy him for about a fortnight only; and he set out, with much regret, at this moment so decisive for his sister. Sarah was at once glad and sorry at her brother's departure. She lost the support of his arguments and advice; but, in the event of all being discovered, he would at least be safe from the grand duke's anger. Sarah wrote to her brother daily, and kept him fully informed of the progress of the business so important to both; and that their correspondence might be the more secure, they wrote in a cipher, which they agreed upon for that purpose, of which Polidori also held the key. This precaution alone would suffice to prove that Sarah had to write to her brother about something more than merely her love for Rodolph. In truth, this cold, selfish, and ambitious woman, had not felt the ice of her heart melt by the glow of passionate love which had been breathed to her. Maternity was looked upon by Sarah merely as a means of action, the more by which to subject Rodolph to her will, and had not shed its softening influence on her iron soul. The youth, the delirious love, and the inexperience of the prince, still almost a boy—these, and the generous con-

fidence which had been so cruelly betrayed, scarcely interested her; in her private communications to her brother, she bitterly and disdainfully complained of the weakness of this young man, who trembled before the very pattern of German princes, *who all lived so very long!* In a word, this correspondence between the brother and sister clearly proved their interested selfishness, their ambitious designs, their almost homicidal impatience, and laid bare all the springs of the dark plot which had been crowned by the marriage of Rodolph. One of Sarah's letters to her brother was abstracted by Polidori, who, as has been said, was cognisant of their mutual communications. For what purpose this abstraction was made, will be seen hereafter.

A few days after the departure of Seyton from Gerolstein, Sarah attended the circle of the dowager grand duchess. Many of the ladies present looked at her with astonishment, and whispered to each other, and smiled satirically. The grand duchess Judith, in spite of her ninety years' age, had good sight and a sharp ear, and the movements of these ladies did not escape her. She motioned to one of her ladies-in-waiting to approach her, and, in reply to her inquiries, was informed that everybody fancied that Miss Sarah Seyton of Halsbury, seemed less slender than usual. The old princess was passionately fond of her lovely *protegée*, and so confident of her virtue, that she would have ventured to answer for it to heaven. Indignant at what she thought the low malevolence of the reply, she shrugged her shoulders disdainfully, and said in a tone to be heard by all present: "My dear Sarah, come here."

Sarah rose from her seat. She had to cross the circle in order to reach the seat of the grand duchess, who wished by the mere fact of her crossing the saloon, to afford ocular proof to her calumniators, that there was no ground for their calumny, by showing that the figure of her *protegée* was as remarkable as ever for its graceful symmetry. Alas! the most perfidious enemy could not, for evil, have devised a plan more decisive against Sarah than that which the kind-hearted princess had chosen for defending her. Sarah approached the princess; and it required all the profound respect that was inspired by the presence of the grand duchess to suppress a cry of indignation and surprise as Sarah crossed the circle. At that moment even the least clear-sighted could perceive that which, in truth, Sarah would not conceal—for her pregnancy was not so far advanced, but that it might with very slight care, have been hidden for some time longer; but the ambitious and resolute woman had sought for this very display, in order to force Rodolph into a public declaration of their marriage. The dowager grand duchess, however, refusing to credit the evidence of her own sight, whispered to her: "My dear child, how frightfully you are dressed to-day! You, whose waist one might span but a few days ago, are now scarcely recognisable."

We shall hereafter relate the consequences of this discovery, which led to great and terrible events. But we may even now say what, probably, the reader has already guessed, that La Goualeuse was the fruit of this secret marriage of Rodolph and Sarah, and who both supposed her to be dead.

* * * *

It has not been forgotten that Rodolph, after having visited the house in the Rue du Temple, had returned to his own home, and intended, in the evening, to be present at a ball given by the * * * ambassadress. It is to this *fête* that we shall follow his royal highness the reigning grand duke of Gerolstein, GUSTAVUS-RODOLPH, travelling in France under the name of the *Count de Duren*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BALL.

At eleven o'clock at night, a Swiss, in state livery, threw open the gates of an hotel in the Rue Plumet, to let out a magnificent blue Berlin carriage, drawn by a pair of beautiful grey horses. Upon the box, which had an ample hammercloth with rich and very deep silk fringes, sat a portly-looking coachman, wearing a three-cornered hat, whose rotundity was rendered still more so by an immense blue driving-coat, richly furred, and having a deep cape of marten-skin, the whole superbly braided with silver lace, and ornamented with massive silver frogs. Behind the carriage stood a tall, powdered footman, attired in blue livery, richly laced with silver; and beside him was a chasseur with enormous moustaches, wearing a livery, or uniform, as gorgeously laced as that of a drum-major, and a wide-flapped hat, which was half concealed by a drooping plume of blue and yellow feathers.

The lamps threw a brilliant light into the interior of this carriage, which was lined with satin, so that any one present might have perceived Rodolph seated on the right, with the Baron de Graün on his left, and the faithful Murphy opposite to him.

In deference to the sovereign represented by the ambassador, to whose ball he was now proceeding, Rodolph wore a single diamond badge of the order of * * *.

The orange riband and enamel cross of the grand commander of the Golden Eagle of Gerolstein were displayed on the breast of Sir Walter Murphy, and the Baron de Graün was similarly decorated; but the baron wore also, suspended by a little chain of gold placed between the two first button-holes of his coat, crosses of all countries, more numerous than we will venture upon attempting to enumerate.

"I am highly pleased," said Rodolph, "to hear the good news that Madame Georges gives me relative to my poor little *protegée*, of the farm of Bouqueval; the skill of David has done wonders. And now that I am speaking of poor La Goualeuse, what do you think, Sir Walter Murphy, if any of your acquaintances of the City were to see you in your present disguise, my valiant coalman, would they not be marvellously astonished?"

"Why, I rather think that your highness would cause no less surprise, were you to go this evening to the Rue du Temple, and pay a friendly visit to Madame Pipelet, for the purpose of soothing the melancholy of that poor dear Alfred, the victim of the infernal Cabrion!"

"My lord has so perfectly depicted Alfred with his majestic green coat, his doctoral air, and his immoveable hat, that I fancy I can see him sitting in his dark and smoky lodge! May I hope that your highness is satisfied with the indications given by my secret agent, and that the visit to the house in the Rue du Temple completely met your expectations," said the baron.

"Yes," said Rodolph, "I have even achieved more than I had anticipated."

Then, after a few moments of painful silence, caused by his fears on account of the Marquise d'Harville, Rodolph, in a gayer tone, resumed: "I scarcely dare to confess such a childishness, but to me there is something extremely amusing in these contrasts: this morning offering a glass of cassia to Madame Pipelet, and in the evening one of those privileged beings who, *by the grace of God*, reign over this lower world. The man of small income speaks of '*my property*,' just the same as a *millionaire!*" added Rodolph, as if by way of parenthetical allusion to the limited extent of his estates.

"But many *millionaires*, my lord, might not possess the rare, the admirable good sense of the man of narrow means," said the baron.

"Ah, my dear De Graün, you are too kind, a thousand times too kind; you really overwhelm me!" said Rodolph, with an ironical smile; while the baron looked at Murphy with the air of a man who has just discovered that he has been saying something foolish. "In truth, my dear De Graün," resumed Rodolph, "I know not how to acknowledge your compliment, or to make a suitable return."

"My lord, I beg that you will not trouble yourself to do so," said the baron, who had for the instant forgotten that Rodolph had the utmost horror of flattery, and never failed to punish it with the most merciless raillery.

"Nay, baron, I cannot allow myself to remain in your debt. You have lauded my superior intelligence—I will in return render my admiration of your figure and countenance. On my honour, you look like a youth of twenty! Antinoüs himself could not boast of finer or more enchanting features than yours."

"Ah, my lord! mercy, mercy!"

"Behold him, Murphy!—has the Apollo Belvedere more elegant, more slender, or more juvenile proportions?"

"Ah, my lord! pardon me, I beseech you. It is a long time since I have permitted myself to flatter your royal highness."

"Observe, Murphy, that circle of gold which confines, but hides not, the locks of his fine, dark hair, that fall in such graceful and wavy profusion upon his beautiful neck, and ——"

"My lord! mercy, mercy! I am very, very penitent!" said the unfortunate diplomatist, with an expression of the most comical despair.

It must not be forgotten that these jokes were passed upon a man full fifty years of age, with thin, grey hair, frizzled and powdered, a stiff white cravat round his shrivelled throat, a pale, withered countenance, and a pair of gold spectacles stuck on the bridge of his sharp, thin nose.

"Pardon, my lord; I must entreat pardon for the baron!" exclaimed the squire, laughing. "Pray do not overwhelm him beneath the weight of that mythology; I will be answerable to your highness that it will be a long time ere he will again venture upon a *flattery;* since it seems that, in the Gerolstein vocabulary, such is the translation for *truth!*"

"What! and you, too, my old Murphy?"

"My lord, I am really in pain for this poor De Graün, and beg that I may take a portion of his punishment."

"Mr. Coalman-in-Ordinary, you display a friendship which does you honour. But, seriously, my dear De Graün, how could you forget that I never endure flattery, except from d'Harneim, and such as he? For one must be just, and those men know not how to say anything else; but a man of your taste, knowledge, wit, and judgment—fie, baron, fie!"

"Well, my lord," replied the baron, resolutely, "your highness must allow me to say, that there is a great deal of pride in your dislike to a just compliment!"

"Well said, baron! that style suits me better; but let me hear you explain yourself."

Well, my lord, it is exactly like a very handsome woman saying to her admirers: "Oh, yes, I know that I am all that is delightful, but your approbation is needless, and therefore wearisome! What is the use of repeating what everybody knows? You might as well run about the streets and say: 'The sun shines!' when all may see his splendour, and feel the warmth of his rays!"

"This is more skilful, but more dangerous, baron; and so, by way of varying your punishment, I will confess to you, that the infernal Polidori himself could not better have disguised the poison of flattery."

"My lord, I am silenced."

"Then," said Murphy, very seriously, "you do not doubt that it was the wretch Polidori whom your highness encountered in the Rue du Temple?"

"I have not the least doubt of it, since you tell me that he has for some time been at Paris."

"I had forgotten, or, rather, I purposely omitted to speak to you of him," said Murphy, sadly; "because I know how hateful the remembrance of that man is to your highness."

The features of Rodolph became clouded again, and, plunged in melancholy reflections, he remained silent till the carriage entered the courtyard of the embassy. All the windows of this immense hotel threw a blaze of light far into the surrounding darkness of the night; a double row of servants, in state livery, extended from the entrance to the antechambers, and thence to the waiting-rooms, where they were replaced by grooms of the chamber in plain clothes.

The Count and Countess * * * * had stationed themselves in the first reception room, to await the arrival of Rodolph, who now entered, followed by Murphy and De Graün.

Rodolph at this period was in his thirty-sixth year, and in the prime of health and manly vigour. His strikingly handsome and regular features, affable and dignified air, combined with the *éclat* given to the whole by his high birth and august rank, rendered him a most attractive man, and of first-rate importance in every circle in which he made his appearance.

Rodolph, on this occasion, was simply attired. He wore a white cravat and waistcoat; a blue coat, buttoned very high up, on the left breast of which shone a diamond star, displayed to perfection the light yet admirable proportions of his elegant figure; while his well-fitting pantaloons of black kerseymere defined the finely-formed leg, and disclosed the handsome foot in its embroidered hose.

The grand duke so rarely visited the *haut monde*, that his arrival caused a great sensation; every eye was fixed upon him, when, followed by Murphy and the Baron de Graün, he entered the first saloon at the embassy. An *attaché*, who had been charged to watch for his appearance, immediately announced him to the countess, who, with her noble husband, immediately approached Rodolph, to whom the countess said: "I have not words adequate to the expres-

sion of the honour done to us by your highness."

"You are aware, madam," said Rodolph, bowing with a most gracious smile, "that I am always anxious for an opportunity of paying my compliments to you, and to remind the count how much of my affection he possesses; for he and I, you know, are very old acquaintances—are we not, count?"

"Your highness is too kind, in condescending to give me a new cause not to forget former favours," said the ambassador.

"I assure you, count, that it is not my fault if certain reminiscences are ever present to my mind; I have the happy faculty of remembering only that which has been extremely agreeable to me."

"Your highness is, indeed, marvellously endowed," said the countess, smiling.

"Am I not, madam? Thus then," replied Rodolph, "will the flattering reception of to-night live long in my memory; and I shall promise myself the pleasure of recalling to mind the display of taste and beauty that now sparkles around us."

"My lord, you are too kind."

"Pardon me, but I have a question to ask you. Why is it that all the ladies seem handsomer to me here than elsewhere?"

"Doubtless because your highness extends to them the kindness with which you overwhelm us," said the count.

"Permit me to differ from you, count; I rather think that the effect is wholly produced by Madame the Ambassadress."

"Will your highness condescend to solve the enigma?" said the countess, with a smile.

"Oh, madam, the explanation is very simple. You have the talent of receiving your lovely guests with such perfect urbanity, and such exquisite grace; you bestow upon each of them a word so delightfully flattering, that those who do not *quite* deserve your amiable praise," said Rodolph, smiling with good-tempered satire, "are only so much the more radiant with joy at having received it; while those who *do* merit it, experience the same effect from their joy at being appreciated by you. These innocent satisfactions light up every countenance, and render even the least agreeable more attractive than she is wont to be! Thus, madam, you have the reason why the ladies always look more lovely beneath your roof than elsewhere; and I am sure that Monsieur the Ambassador will agree with me."

"Your highness's argument is too flattering to me to allow of my opposing it."

"And I," said the countess, "at the risk of becoming as handsome as those ladies who do not *quite* merit the flattering praises bestowed upon them, I accept this complimentary explanation with as much gratitude and pleasure as if it were the true one."

"To convince you, madam, that it is so," replied Rodolph, "let us make some observations upon the effect of praise upon the countenance."

"Ah, my lord," replied the countess, "that would be a terrible snare!"

"Well, madam, I will give up my project, but on condition that you will honour me by taking my arm. I have heard of a flower-garden—a veritable fairy-land in the depth of winter; will you be good enough to let me see this wonder worthy of the *Thousand and One Nights*?"

"Oh, my lord, with the greatest pleasure; but, in truth, it has been much exaggerated to your highness, as you will perceive—unless, indeed, you suffer your usual indulgence to deceive you. But perhaps you will accompany me, and judge for yourself."

The countess took the offered arm of Rodolph, and proceeded with him to the other apartments, while the count remained behind, in conversation with the Baron de Graün and Murphy, with whom he had long been acquainted.

Rodolph's allusion to the *Thousand and One Nights* was, indeed, a happy one; for nothing could be more worthy of their fairy marvels than the winter garden to which he now conducted his noble hostess. Let us imagine, abutting upon a long and splendid gallery, an enclosure about forty feet in length, and thirty feet in width, covered with a glazed roof of great lightness, in the form of a parallelogram, its walls concealed by an infinite number of mirrors, over which is placed a delicate trellising, which, thanks to the strong light reflected on the highly-polished glass, resemble an open bower, and almost entirely hidden by a thick row of orange trees as large as those of the Tuileries, and of no less splendid camelias—the first laden with fruit, shining like so many golden apples among the polished green of the foliage, and the second enamelled with a profusion of flowers, purple, white, and red. This was the enclosure of the garden. Five or six enormous clumps of trees, and Indian or other tropical shrubs, deeply planted in heath soil, were surrounded by marble walks beautifully inlaid with mosaic shell-work, and wide enough for two or three persons to walk abreast.

To describe the details is in itself an easy task, but it is impossible to give any idea of the wonderful effect produced by this display of vigorous exotic vegetation in mid-winter, and almost, as it were, in the very centre of a ball-room!

Here, enormous bananas well nigh reached the glazing of the arched roof, mingling their broad palms with the lanceolated and bright green foliage of tall magnolias, already covered with flowers as odoriferous as magnificent, stamens of gold darting from their bell-shaped calices, purple without and silvery within. Farther on were grouped the palm and date-trees of the Levant, the red macaw and Indian fig-trees, all full of bloom and healthful vigour, and displaying their foliage in all its exotic luxuriance, giving to the whole a blending of rich and rare verdure which, amid the innumerable lights, sparkled with the hues of the emerald.

Along the trellising, between the orange-trees, among the trees in clumps, twining and climbing, here in garlands of flowers and leaves, there twisted into fantastically graceful festoons, then depending like blooming serpents from the tall boughs—now trailing at their roots, and, farther on, ambitiously climbing the very walls, twining into inextricable net-work, ran innumerable parasitical plants. The winged pomegranate, the passion-flower, with its large blossoms of purple, striped with azure, and crowned with a diadem of dark violet, fell from the roof like colossal garlands, and seemed endeavouring to remount as they clung to the gigantic aloes.

In another spot, an Indian bignonia, with its long calices of dark sulphur-colour, and its slight foliage, was encircled by a stephanotis, with its fleshy and white flowers, that give forth so delicate a scent; these two embracing friends, festooning with their green fringe and golden and silver bells, the immense velvet foliage of an

Indian fig. Still farther on, there leaped up and fell downward again, like a variegated floral cascade, whole hosts of the stems of asclepias, whose leaves and clusters of fifteen or twenty starry flowers were so thick and so polished, that they resembled bouquets of red enamel encircled by little leaves of green porcelain. The borders of the clumps were composed of Cape heaths, of Thol tulips, of Constantinople narcissuses, of Persian hyacinths, and other exotics, which formed a sort of natural carpet, in which all colours and all shades were mixed in the most splendid manner.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk, some pale blue, others of delicate rose-colour, half concealed among the foliage, threw a soft, mild light over the enchanting scene. It is impossible to describe the soft and mysterious light which resulted from the commingling of these two shades; a lively and fantastic light, resembling the azure clearness of a fine summer's night, slightly ruddied by the vermilion gleamings of a bright northern daybreak.

This immense artificial garden, sunk two or three feet, was reached by a long gallery, glittering with gold, glasses, crystals, and wax-lights. This dazzling approach formed, so to speak, the penumbra in which were indistinctly traced the gigantic trees of the winter garden, which was seen through a wide bay, half concealed by two high doors of crimson velvet. It had the effect of a gigantic window opening upon some splendid Asiatic landscape in the calm twilight of the night hours.

Seen from the garden, where immense divans were arranged beneath a canopy of leaves and flowers, the gallery offered an immense contrast to the soft obscurity of the earth; it was, in the distance, a sort of luminous golden haze, upon which gleamed and sparkled, like a living embroidery, the various and dazzling colours of the dresses of the ladies, and the prismatic and ever-varying flashes of their costly gems.

The sounds of the music, subdued and mellowed by the distance, and by the low and joyous hum that proceeded from the gallery, died languidly away among the motionless foliage of the large exotic trees. Seated in this garden, one involuntarily spoke in a hushed tone, that scarcely rose above the light footfall, and the gentle rustling of silks and satins; and the air, at once so light, so warm, and so balmy with the thousand odorous breathings of the plants and flowers, and that distant and vague music, threw all the senses into a sweet and soft lassitude. Certainly, a chaste pair, newly loving and happy, seated in some shady corner of this Eden, intoxicated with love, melody, and perfume, could have found no more delicious shelter for the day-spring of their passion.

On reaching this splendid triumph of art, Rodolph could not restrain an exclamation of unfeigned delight, and he naturally said to the ambassadress: "In truth, madam, I could not have credited the possibility of such an enchantment. It is not only a great luxuriousness joined to a most exquisite taste, but it is poetry in action; instead of writing as a great poet, or painting as a great painter, you create that which they can barely dream!"

"Indeed, your highness is too indulgent."

"Nay, frankly now—confess, that he could faithfully describe this enchanting picture, with all its charming colours, contrasts, and harmonies—yonder that dazzling crowd, here this delicious retreat—confess, madam, that he, whether painter or poet, would make a most admirable work, merely in copying yours."

"The praises which are inspired by your highness's goodness, are all the more dangerous, because it is impossible to avoid being delighted with the wit which makes me listen to them, even involuntarily. But see, your highness, what a charming young woman! Your royal highness will at least concede to me, that the Marquise d'Harville must look lovely *everywhere!* Is she not delightfully graceful? And does she not even gain by contrast with the severer beauty of the lady who accompanies her?"

The Countess Sarah Macgregor and the Marquise d'Harville were at this moment descending the few steps that led from the gallery into the winter garden. The praises bestowed by the ambassadress upon the beauty of the marquise were not exaggerated. No words can give an adequate idea of the enchanting sweetness of that face, over which was spread the fullest perfection of a most delicate style of beauty; a beauty the more rare, because it sprang less from regularity of features, than from the inexpressible charm of the physiognomy of the marquise, whose sweet countenance seemed modestly veiled, so to speak, under a touching expression of *kindness*. We especially emphaticise that word, because kindliness is not precisely the most usual expression of the physiognomy of a young woman of twenty, so lovely, so witty, so sought, followed, and caressed, as was the Marquise d'Harville, who shone out in all her lustre as the brightest star in the galaxy of fashion. Too dignified, too eminently and exquisitely gifted to seek homage, the marquise, however, showed herself as affectionately grateful for that which was paid to her, as though she had not been worthy of it. She was not proud of it, but delighted—innocently delighted with it. Indifferent to praise, but very sensible to kindness, she well knew how to distinguish between sympathy and insincerity. Her clear, correct mind, sometimes satirical, but never malignant, especially pursued with witty but inoffensive raillery those self-admiring, self-worshipping people, who crowd and oppress society with the view of monopolising universal attention, and, blinded by their own self-love, expect one general deference and submission. "People who," as Madame d'Harville once jocularly said, "seem to pass their entire lives in dancing *Le Cavalier Seul* before an invisible mirror, upon which they smile complaisantly."

A character at once timid and almost proud in its reserve, inspired Madame d'Harville with a friendly interest.

These few words are absolutely necessary to the proper understanding of certain facts to be spoken of hereafter.

The complexion of Madame d'Harville was of the purest white, shaded by the most delicate carnation; long ringlets of light chesnut hair fell upon her shoulders, that were as firm and clear as the finest marble. It would be difficult to paint the angelic beauty of her large, dark grey eyes, fringed with long black silken lashes. Her coral lips, expressing the most agreeable gentleness, bore the same resemblance to her charming eyes, that her touching and affable voice did to her gentle and melancholy glance. It is unnecessary to speak of her perfect figure, or the exquisite distinction of her whole person.

She wore a robe of white crape, ornamented with natural flowers of the camelia, intermixed with its own rich green leaves; among which, diamonds, half hidden here and there, shone like so many drops of sparkling dew. A garland, similarly composed, sat gracefully upon her pure, white brow.

The peculiar style of beauty of the Countess Sarah Macgregor served to heighten, by contrast, the more feminine loveliness of her companion. Aged about thirty-five, Sarah appeared to be much younger. Nothing seems sounder of body than cold egotism; freshness is preserved a long time in that icy covering. Certain dry, hard souls, unalterable by the emotions which wear alike the heart and the features, are invulnerable to aught but mortifications of pride or the failure of ambitious designs, and these griefs have, comparatively, small effect upon the features. To this cause may be ascribed the wonderful physical preservation of the Countess Sarah. Save for a slight fulness, which gave to her figure (taller, but not so slender as that of the marquise) a graceful voluptuousness, Sarah shone in juvenile brilliancy of beauty; few could gaze steadily upon the deceiving fire of her ardent black eyes; her nose was aquiline; her finely-formed mouth and rich ruby lips were expressive of haughtiness, scorn, and firmness.

The Countess Macgregor wore a robe of straw-coloured mohair under a crape tunic of the same colour, and a simple crown of natural leaves of the *pyrus japonicus* encircled her head, and harmonised well with the bandeaux of her jetty hair. This severe style of head-dress imparted a classical character to the imperious profile of this woman. Many people, the dupes of their own countenance, see in its style and expression the outward and visible sign of an irresistible vocation. One has, or fancies he has, a very warlike physiognomy, and he fights; another a rhyming one, and he poetises; a conspiring one, and he conspires; a preaching one, and he preaches—and so on. Sarah, very truly, imagined hers to be a royal physiognomy; she, of course, must accept the half-realized predictions of her Highland nurse, and persist in the belief of her predestined sovereign rank.

The marquise and Sarah perceived Rodolph in the winter garden, as they descended thither; but he feigned not to have seen them.

"The prince is so attentive to the ambassadress," said the marquise to Sarah, "that he has not noticed us."

"Oh, do not fancy that, my dear Clémence," said Sarah; "on the contrary, he *did* notice us; but he is afraid of me. His sulkiness still continues."

"His obstinate avoidance of you is more than ever unintelligible to me. I have often reproached him with the strangeness of his conduct towards you, who are so old a friend. His jocular reply has been: 'The Countess Sarah and I are mortal enemies; I have made a vow that I will never speak to her, and that vow must be sacred indeed, to induce me to refrain from conversing with so amiable a woman.' And so, my dear Sarah, singular as this reply appeared to me, I was obliged to submit to it."

"I assure you, that the cause of this mortal quarrel," said Sarah, half serious and half jocular, "is extremely innocent, and I should long ago have explained it to you, were not a third person concerned in it. But what is the matter with you, my dear girl? You seem thoughtful."

"Oh, nothing—nothing, I assure you! It was so hot in the gallery just now, that I feel a slight attack of head-ache; let us sit down here for a minute or two, and I dare say it will pass off."

"Let us do so; see, here is a nice quiet corner, where you will be perfectly sheltered from the researches of those whom your absence will throw into despair," added Sarah, pronouncing the last words with marked emphasis.

The two ladies then seated themselves upon a divan, sheltered by luxuriant foliage.

"I said *those* whom your absence will drive to despair, my dear Clémence," resumed Sarah; "do you not thank me for my discretion?"

The young marquise slightly blushed, bowed her head, and made no reply.

"How unreasonable you are!" said Sarah, in a tone of gentle reproach: "Can you not confide in me, child?—No doubt, *child*, for I am old enough to be your mother."

"I not confide in *you!*" said the marquise, sadly; "have I not, on the contrary, confessed that to you which I ought never to have said even to myself?"

"Well! come, let us speak of *him*: have you sworn to drive him to despair and death?"

"Ah!" cried the marquise, in a tone of alarm: "what do you speak of?"

"You do not know him yet, my dear child; he is a man of bold energy, to whom life is but a mere trifle. He has always been so unhappy, and it seems that you take daily pleasure in tormenting him."

"Can you possibly think that?"

"It is involuntarily done, perhaps, but undoubtedly you do it. Oh! did you but know how painfully sensitive and impressionable are those minds rendered who are crushed by long-continued suffering! It was but now, that I saw two large tears fall from his eyes, as he looked on you."

"Can that be true?"

"Indeed, it is so; and this too in the midst of a ball, and at the risk of becoming an object of general derision, had any one but me perceived those signs of his bitter grief. Oh! be assured, he must love well and truly to bear all this, and especially so, to be careless of concealing from the world so much suffering."

"For mercy's sake, speak no more of this!" returned the marquise, in a tone of emotion, "you put me on the rack. Alas! I am only too well acquainted with that expression of suffering, so gentle and so resigned. Alas! alas!" added Madame d'Harville, involuntarily, "it is the deep pity with which he has inspired me that has been my ruin."

"What exaggeration! Ruined by having coquetted with a man who even carries his discretion and reserve so far as to refrain from being presented to your husband, lest he should compromise you! Is not M. Charles Robert a man full of honour, delicacy, and heart? I defend him with so much warmth, because you have never met him but at my house, and because I know that his deep respect is only equalled by his attachment for you."

"I have never doubted the noble qualities you so often assured me he possesses; but you must be aware that it is more especially for his misfortunes that he has become so interesting in my eyes."

"And well he merits and justifies that interest.

How can so admirable a countenance be other than the image of an admirable soul? With his tall and beautiful figure, he always reminds me of the chevaliers of bygone days. I once saw him in the uniform of a commandant of the National Guard, and it was impossible to look more nobly than he did then. I could not help thinking, that if nobility depended upon air, figure, and countenance, he would be a duke and peer of France, instead of being simply M. Charles Robert. Would he not admirably represent some one of the noble houses of France?"

"You are aware that I attach no great importance to nobility of birth, for you sometimes reproach me with being rather inclined to republicanism," said the Marquise d'Harville, smiling.

"For my part, I have always thought, with you, that M. Charles Robert needs no title to render him amiable—and then, what rare talent he possesses! what a charming voice! What an assistance he was to us in our private morning concerts! Ah, Clémence! do you remember the first time he sang a duet with you, what a touching pathos he threw into his every note—what feeling!"

"Hold, I entreat you," said Madame d'Harville, after a long pause; "let us change the conversation."

"Why?"

"Oh, this makes me so very melancholy, indeed I cannot listen further. You tell me of his deep depression and unhappy looks, and it pains my heart."

"Believe me that, from excessive grief, a man of his nature, so sad, and yet so impassionate, is very capable of seeking in death——"

"Oh! no more! no more!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville, interrupting Sarah; "that dreadful idea has already crossed my mind." Then, after a long silence, the marquise added: "Let us, as I said, talk of somebody else—of your mortal enemy, for instance," said she, with an air of assumed gravity: "Let us speak of the prince, whom I had not seen for so long a time. Do you know, he is as delightful as ever, though he is almost a king! Republican as I may be, I am quite willing to confess that there are few men so agreeable as he."

Sarah covertly fixed a look of scrutinising hatred upon the marquise, and then in a gay tone replied: "Now confess, my dear Clémence, that you are a sufficently capricious young lady! I have known you to have single alternatives of admiration and aversion for that same prince; a few months ago—I mean about the time of his first arrival here—you were so infatuated with him, that between ourselves, I feared for a moment, the safety of your heart."

"Thanks to you," replied Madame d'Harville, my admiration was very short-lived; for so well did you play the part of 'mortal enemy' to the prince, and such fearful revelations did you make of his profligacy and his misconduct, that I must confess, aversion took the place of that infatuation which alarmed you for my heart, whose repose, however, your 'mortal enemy' had no apparent design of disturbing; for a short time before I received your revelations, the prince, though he continued to be as intimate as ever with my husband, rarely honoured me with a visit."

"Talking of your husband—is he here this evening?" asked Sarah.

"No! he preferred remaining at home," replied Madame d'Harville, with embarrassment.

"It seems to me that he goes less and less into society."

"He never liked fashionable gaieties."

The marquise was visibly embarrassed. Sarah perceived it, and continued: "The last time that I saw him, he appeared paler than usual."

"He has been somewhat unwell."

"Shall I be candid with you, my dear Clémence?"

"Oh, yes, pray——"

"How is it, when your husband is spoken of, that you become so agitated and uneasy?"

"I? What folly!"

"Sometimes in speaking of him, in spite of yourself, your countenance expresses—but how can I make you understand?" and Sarah paused; then looking as though she would read the inmost soul of Clémence, and laying great stress upon the words, she slowly continued: "Yes! your features at such times seem to express a sort of aversion, mingled with fear!"

The impassible features of Madame d'Harville at first defied the scrutinising gaze of Sarah, but her practised eye soon detected a slight though scarcely perceptible nervous quivering of the under lip. Not wishing to push her investigation further, and especially not desiring to arouse the suspicion of her friend, the countess hastened to disguise her real meaning, by adding: "Yes, a timid aversion, such as is inspired by a jealous, peevish, ill-tempered——"

At this explanation, the slight quivering of Madame d'Harville's lip ceased; she appeared to be relieved of a very heavy load, and replied: "Oh, no; let me assure you, M. d'Harville is neither cross or jealous." Then, as if seeking some means to turn a conversation so painful to her feelings, she suddenly exclaimed: "Ah! here comes the insupportable Duke de Lucenay, one of my husband's most tiresome friends. I hope he will not perceive us! Whence has he sprung? I thought he was a thousand miles hence!"

"Why, in fact, he was said to have gone to the East for a year or two, and it is scarcely six months since he set out. His arrival is very sudden, and must singularly annoy the duchess, though the poor duke is so very inoffensive," added Sarah, with a malicious and meaning smile. "Nor will the duchess be alone in her vexation at this speedy return; her friend, M. de Saint-Remy, will, doubtless, share her regrets."

"Come, come, my dear Sarah, do not be slanderous; say that this speedy return will be an annoyance to—every one; the duke, however, is sufficiently disagreeable to allow of the generalisation of your reproach."

"Oh, certainly not slanderous; I merely repeat in this case. It is also said, that M. de Saint-Remy, the model of fashionables, who has dazzled all Paris, is nearly ruined, although his vast expenses are scarcely at all diminished. However, there are more ways than one of accounting for that—Madame de Lucenay is immensely rich——"

"Ah! what horror!"

"Once more, I only repeat what others say. The duke perceives us. He is coming towards us; we must resign ourselves to our fate. How miserable! I know of nothing in the world more completely insupportable than this man; he is often so vulgar, he laughs so long and so loud at

his own stupidities, and is so noisy, that it is quite horrifying. If you have any regard for your smelling-bottle or your fan, beware how he handles them; for, to his other agreeable qualities, he adds a determined propensity to break everything that he touches, and that in the pleasantest and most self-satisfied manner that you can imagine."

Belonging to one of the first families of France, still young, of a countenance which would not have been unpleasing but for the grotesque and disproportionate length of his nose, the Duke de Lucenay, added to perpetual turbulence of voice and manner a laughter so tremendously loud and long, speeches often in such detestable taste, and attitudes so abrupt and awkward, that it was necessary every instant to recollect his name to avoid being astonished at seeing him in the midst of the most distinguished company in Paris, and in order to understand how toleration could be extended to his eccentricities of language and gesture, to which, however, habit had secured a sort of license or impunity. He was shunned as a pest, although he was by no means destitute of a sort of wit which glanced here and there through the most incredible exuberance of words. He was one of those avenging beings into whose hands one would always wish to throw those whom we despise.

The Duchess of Lucenay, one of the most agreeable, and also one of the most fashionable women in Paris, though full thirty years of age, had caused herself to be very often spoken of; but the world almost excused the levity of her conduct, in consideration of the insupportable oddities of her husband.

Another trait in the duke's character was, a singular affectation of the most outrageously absurd expressions relative to imaginary complaints and ridiculous infirmities which he diverted himself in attributing to people, and on the score of which he would loudly pity them in the immediate presence of a hundred persons. Possessed of first-rate courage, the Duke de Lucenay readily risked all consequences of his absurd jokes, and had several times fought duels, and been wounded, but without the slightest abatement of his absurdities.

Having stated thus much, the reader must now suppose that he hears the sharp and piercing voice of the personage we have described, who, the instant that he perceived Sarah and Madame d'Harville, though he was still at a distance from them, called out: "Well, well—what's all that? What do I see? The prettiest woman at the ball hiding herself from everybody! I can't allow this. Was it necessary that I should return from the antipodes to put a stop to such doings? In the first place, marquise, if you persist in hiding yourself from general admiration, I will raise a cry of 'fire!' and attract everybody around the most charming ornament of this *fête*."

Then, by way of a finish to this elegant address, the marquis threw himself almost on his back beside the ladies, crossed his left leg upon his right thigh, and took his foot in his hand.

"How, my lord! have you so soon returned from Constantinople?" said Madame d'Harville, impatiently recoiling.

"There, now! you have *said* just what my wife *thought*; for, instead of rushing to my arms with surprised delight at my return, she turned sulky, and refused to accompany me this evening on my re-entering company; and I declare that her absence has produced a far greater effect than my presence. Funny, isn't it? When she is with me, nobody takes any notice of me; but when I entered the room alone, a crowd came buzzing round me, all asking at once: 'Where is Madame de Lucenay? is she not coming this evening? Oh, what a disappointment! how vexatious!' &c. &c.; and then, marquise, after returning from Constantinople, when I come to speak to you, thinking you would be delighted to see me, you look upon me like a stray dog; and I don't see why I am not as agreeable as other people."

"It is simple enough; you could so easily have remained agreeable—in the East!" said Madame d'Harville, with a half smile.

"You mean, that I might have stayed away altogether? Oh! horror and infamy!" shouted the Duke de Lucenay, uncrossing his legs, and beating upon his hat as though it had been a drum.

"For the love of heaven, my lord, do not scream so loudly, and do keep yourself still, or you will fairly drive us away!" said Madame d'Harville, angrily.

"Drive you away? Oh! you wish to take my arm, and make a turn or two in the gallery?"

"With you?—certainly not. Come, now, pray do not touch that bouquet; and for mercy's sake, let my fan alone too—you will only break it, according to your custom."

"Oh, as far as that goes, I am rather unlucky; for I broke a magnificent Chinese fan which Madame de Vaudémont gave to my wife." And as he finished this encouraging speech, the duke fidgeted with a tangled line of climbing plants, which he drew to him by a succession of slight jerks. He at length succeeded in detaching them from the tree which had supported them; they fell, and his lordship might, without metaphor, be said to be crowned with them. Then, pleased with his victory, he burst into laughter so shrill, so wild, and so deafening, that Madame d'Harville would fairly have fled from this troublesome and inconvenient neighbour, had she not perceived M. Charles Robert, the *commandant* of Madame Pipelet's little history, who was approaching from the other end of the walk: and the marquise, fearing to appear to seek a meeting with the new-comer, resumed her seat beside M. de Lucenay.

"Tell me now, Lady Macgregor, do I not marvellously resemble the god Pan, a Naïad, or some sylvan savage, under this bunch of foliage?" said M. de Lucenay to Sarah, against whom he sprung, with all his leafy honours thick upon him. "And, talking of savages, I will tell you an outrageously indecent story. Only picture to yourself, that at Otaheite——"

"Duke!" said Sarah, in her sternest and most icy tone.

"Well, well, I will not tell you my story, then; I will keep it for Madame Fonbonne, whom I see coming this way."

Madame Fonbonne was a short, podgy woman, of some fifty years old or so, very affected and very ridiculous, whose chin reposed on her equally fat neck, and who constantly shewed the whites of her large staring eyes, and was continually talking of the languors of her soul, the cravings of her soul, the aspirations of her soul, and so forth. To these disadvantages she added that of being particularly ill-dressed. She wore, upon the present occasion, a frightful-

looking turban of copper-coloured stuff, with green stripes.

"Yes!" again shouted the duke, "I will keep my story for Madame de Fonbonne."

"What is that, my lord duke?" said Madame de Fonbonne, mincing and cooing, and "turning up the whites of her eyes," as the vulgar have it.

"It is, madam, a horribly improper, incongruous, revolting, and indecent story."

"Ah, bless me! and who will dare to permit himself to tell it?—who will have the audacity to ——"

"I, madam, I! It would make an old bawd blush; but I know you are fond of such stories, and I will relate this to you. Now, just listen. In Otaheite ——"

"My lord! it is inconceivable that you should permit yourself to ——"

"Well, well, since you are so disagreeable, I will not tell you another word of my story, although I reserved it on purpose for you; but, looking at you—*you*, who are so celebrated for the tasteful elegance of your dress, allow me to add, that the wretched-looking turban with which you have adorned your head this evening, looks like an old stewpan streaked with verdigris!" And so saying, the duke again indulged in a vociferous peal of laughter.

"If you have merely returned from the East for the purpose of resuming the practice of your sorry jests, which are only tolerated on account of your being half mad," said the irritated and podgy lady, "your going back to the East would be very little regretted, sir." And the lady waddled majestically away.

"I tell you what, Lady Macgregor, if you don't take care of me, I shall be after the old woman, and knock her stewpan about her ears," said M. de Lucenay, throwing himself on his back on the divan, and kicking his heels in the air. "But, no," said he, resuming a more delicate position, "I will have mercy on her, poor thing—she's only an orphan—and of tender age, too!—ha! ha! ha!" And renewed laughter announced that the duke was again delighted with himself. In a minute or two he bawled out: "Hallo! here comes M. Charles Robert. I met him at Baden-Baden last summer—deuced smart fellow—sings like a swan. Now, marquise, I'll show you some sport. Would you like to be introduced to him?"

"Pray be quiet, and don't interfere with us, I beg," said Sarah, haughtily, turning her back most unceremoniously upon M. de Lucenay.

While M. Charles Robert had been slowly advancing, affecting to be engaged in admiring the flowers, M. de Lucenay had cleverly contrived to possess himself of Sarah's smelling-bottle, and he was now silently and carefully busied in depriving it of its gold top.

M. Charles Robert still kept advancing; his tall figure was finely proportioned, his features of an irreproachable regularity, and his attire of a supreme elegance; yet his countenance, his whole person, were wanting in charm, in grace, in distinction: his gait was stiff and embarrassed, and his hands and feet large and coarse. When he perceived Madame d'Harville, his insignificant countenance assumed an expression of deep melancholy, far too sudden to be genuine; nevertheless, the acting was perfect in its way. M. Robert had the air of being so frightfully unhappy, so naturally despairing, as he came up to Madame d'Harville, that she could not refrain from thinking of the dreadful mention which Sarah had made of the excess to which violent grief might drive him.

"Ah! good evening, my dear sir," said M. de Lucenay, stopping the commandant. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you since we met at —— But what is the matter with you? You look as though you couldn't help it!"

M. Robert cast a long and melancholy look at Madame de Harville, and replied to the duke, in a most plaintive tone: "Indeed, my lord, I am in a state of great suffering."

"God bless me! what then is the matter with you? Are you still troubled with that wretched cough?" asked the duke, with an air of the most serious interest.

At this ridiculous question, M. Charles Robert remained for a moment completely stupefied; then a blush of anger rose to his very forehead, and he said to M. de Lucenay, in a short, firm voice: "Since you take so much interest in my health, my lord, I trust that you will not fail to call and inquire for me to-morrow morning."

"What! how, my dear sir!—but, certainly, I will *send*," said the duke, haughtily, making a half bow to M. Charles Robert, who, coolly returning it, walked away.

"The best of the joke is, that he has no more cough than the Grand Turk," said M. de Lucenay, again throwing himself by the side of Sarah, "at least, as far as I know; he's as likely to have a cough as any other complaint, and I might have accidentally stumbled upon the truth. What say you, Lady Macgregor, does it seem to you that the tall person is troubled with phlegm?"

Sarah replied by abruptly leaving her seat, and hastily removing from the annoying duke. All this passed very quickly. Sarah had but with difficulty resisted her inclination to laugh outright, at the absurd question put by the Duke de Lucenay to the commandant; but Madame d'Harville had painfully sympathized with the feelings of a woman thus questioned before a woman whom he loved. She was alarmed at the idea that a duel would probably take place; then, urged by an irresistible feeling of pity, Clémence suddenly rose, took Sarah's arm, overtook M. Charles Robert, who could scarcely retain his rage, and whispered, as she passed close to him: "To-morrow, at one o'clock, *I will be there*." Then, regaining the gallery with the countess, she quitted the ball.

Rodolph, in going to this *fête*, in addition to a duty of politeness imposed on him by his position in society, wished to take the opportunity of endeavouring to discover if his fears and suspicions as regarded Madame d'Harville had any solid foundation, and if she really was the heroine of Madame Pipelet's story. After leaving the winter garden with the Countess * * *, Rodolph had vainly traversed the various rooms in the hope of meeting with Madame d'Harville unattended. He was returning to the hot-house, when, having stopped for an instant at the top of the steps, he witnessed the rapid scene that passed between Madame d'Harville and M. Charles Robert, after the detestably foolish joke of M. de Lucenay. Rodolph, surprised at the very significant glances that passed between Clémence and the *commandant*, felt a secret assurance that the tall and handsome young man was the mysterious lodger of the Rue du Temple. Anxious for further confirmation, Rodolph returned to the gallery. A waltz was about to commence. At the end of a few minutes, he saw M. Charles

Robert standing in a doorway, evidently very much pleased with himself—enjoying perhaps the recollection of his retort to M. de Lucenay (for M. Charles Robert, in spite of his egregious follies, was not destitute of courage), or revelling in the triumph of having thus obtained a voluntary assignation with Madame d'Harville for the morrow, who he felt very certain would not disappoint him this time.

Rodolph went in search of Murphy.

"You see the fair young man in the centre of the group yonder?"

"That tall gentleman, who looks so extremely satisfied with himself? Yes, my lord, I see him."

"Endeavour to get near enough to whisper to him, without his seeing you, and in such wise that he alone may hear you, these words: '*You are very late, my angel.*'"

The squire looked at Rodolph with an air of stupefaction.

"Are you serious, my lord, in wishing me to do this?"

"I am, my dear Murphy; and if, on hearing those words, he should hastily turn round, assume that incomparable air of coolness which I have so often admired, so as to prevent the possibility of his fixing upon you as the person who spoke."

"I obey, my lord, although I am wholly at a loss to comprehend your reasons for wishing me to do this."

Before the waltz was concluded, the worthy Murphy had succeeded in stationing himself immediately behind M. Charles Robert, while Rodolph, posted so as to lose none of the effect of this experiment, attentively followed Murphy with his eyes. In a minute, M. Charles Robert turned suddenly round, with an air of astonishment and wonder. The imperturbable squire moved not a muscle of his countenance; and certainly that tall, bald-headed man, with so grave and imposing an aspect, was the last person whom the commandant could have suspected of uttering those words, which reminded him of the disagreeable *quid pro quo* of which Madame Pipelet had been at once the cause and the heroine. The waltz finished, Murphy rejoined Rodolph.

"Well, my lord, the young man turned as sharply round as though I had bitten him. Are those words magical, then?"

"They are so far magical, my old Murphy, that they have discovered to me what I was most anxious to know."

Rodolph could now only pity Madame d'Harville for an error which was all the more dangerous if, as he had a vague presentiment, Sarah was an accomplice or a confidant in the matter; and with this discovery came the additional pain of believing that herein was the cause of the secret grief of the Marquis d'Harville, whom he most tenderly loved. His wife, endowed with charming qualities, had sacrificed herself to a man unworthy of her. Master of a secret which he had learned by accident, incapable of abusing it, equally incapable of doing aught towards warning Madame d'Harville—who, moreover, had yielded to the blind promptings of passion—Rodolph saw himself condemned to be a quiet spectator of the ruin of this young and lovely woman, whom, in spite of himself, he still loved. He was roused from these reflections by M. de Graün.

"If," said the baron, "your highness will favour me with a short interview in a small side-room which is quite vacant, I shall have the honour to give you the result of the inquiries you ordered me to make."

Rodolph followed the baron, who, when they reached the unoccupied apartment, recited as follows:—

"The only duchess to whose name the initials 'N.' and 'L.' belong, is Madame de Lucenay, whose maiden name was Noirmont. She is not here this evening; but I have seen her husband, M. de Lucenay, who set out about five months since to travel in the East, and who suddenly returned within the last two or three days."

It will be remembered that Rodolph, during his visit to the house in the Rue du Temple, had found on the staircase leading to the apartment of the charlatan, Cæsar Bradamanti, a handkerchief bathed with tears, richly bordered with lace, and having in the corners the letters N. and L., surmounted by a ducal coronet. According to his orders, though in ignorance of the circumstance, M. de Graün had inquired the names of all the duchesses then at Paris, and had obtained the information now recited to Rodolph, and which the latter perfectly comprehended. He had no especial reason to interest himself about the Duchess de Lucenay; but he could not help shuddering as he reflected that, if it really was she who had visited the charlatan, that wretch—who was no other than Polidori—doubtless was in possession of the name of the duchess, seeing that he had caused her to be followed by Tortillard; and Rodolph well knew how fearfully capable the charlatan was of abusing the secret which placed the duchess in his power.

"Chance is sometimes very singular, my lord, is it not?" resumed M. de Graün.

"It is; but why remark it now?"

"At the moment when M. de Grangeneuve was giving me the information about M. and Madame de Lucenay, and was maliciously remarking how much the unexpected return of M. Lucenay must have annoyed his duchess and the Viscount de Saint-Remy, one of the most elegant and fashionable young men in Paris, his excellency the ambassador asked me if I thought that your highness would permit him to present the viscount, who is here, having been just appointed to the Gerolstein legation, and would be only too happy to have this opportunity of paying his respects to your highness."

Rodolph made a gesture of vexation, and said: "It is very disagreeable, but I do not see how I can refuse; let the count know that I am ready to receive M. de Saint-Remy."

Notwithstanding his vexation, Rodolph was too perfect in his princely etiquette to show any want of affability on such an occasion; moreover, common report gave M. de Saint-Remy as a favoured lover to the Duchess de Lucenay, and this circumstance excited the curiosity of Rodolph.

The Viscount de Saint-Remy now approached, conducted by his excellency the ambassador. M. de Saint-Remy was a very handsome young man, about twenty-five years of age; slender, graceful, of a most distinguished appearance, and with a prepossessing countenance; he had a very dark complexion, but it was of that velvetty, transparent, and amber-coloured hue, so remarkable in the portraits of Murillo; his black hair separated by a line above the left temple, was smooth upon the forehead, yet curled gracefully around his

face, and scarcely allowed the lobe of his small, pale ear to be seen; the deep black of the pupils was brilliantly set in the balls of his eyes, which, instead of being white, had that slightly azure shade which gives so charming an expression to the glance of the Indians. By a caprice of nature, the thick moustache which graced his lip, was the only ornament of a similar description visible on his countenance, the chin and cheeks being as smooth as those of a young girl; and he wore a coquettishly shallow cravat of black satin, which displayed a throat worthy of the artist's study. A single pearl confined the long ends of his cravat—a pearl of inestimable value from its size, the beauty of its form, and its oriental brilliancy—so vivid, that an opal could not have rivalled its prismatic changes. The exquisite style of M. de Saint-Remy harmonised admirably with the magnificent simplicity of this gem. Once seen, it was impossible to forget the face and figure of M. de Saint-Remy, so much did it differ from the ordinary style of fashionable men.

His luxuriousness in carriages and horses was extreme. He played high, but skilfully; while the annual amount of his betting-book reached to two or three thousand louis. His house in the Rue de Chaillot was spoken of as a model of elegant sumptuousness; there he gave the most splendid dinners, when afterwards the play ran high, and the hospitable host frequently lost considerable sums with the most perfect indifference, though it was well known that he had long ago dissipated his patrimony. All the viscount's property was derived from his mother; while his father lived in comparative poverty and seclusion in the wilds of Anjou.

By way of accounting for these incomprehensible prodigalities of M. de Saint-Remy, the envious and the malignant spoke, as Sarah had done, of the great wealth of the Duchess de Lucenay; but they forgot that, even setting aside the vileness of the supposition hinted at, M. de Lucenay naturally had a control over the fortune of his wife, and that M. de Saint-Remy spent at least two hundred thousand francs per annum. Others spoke of imprudent usurers; *imprudent*, because M. de Saint-Remy had no further inheritance to expect. Others, again, spoke of him as being very lucky on the turf; and whispered about trainers and jockies being bribed by him to cause those horses to lose against which he had betted heavily. But the greater number of his acquaintance gave themselves not the slightest possible concern about the means to which he had recourse for maintaining himself in pomp and luxury.

By birth and education, he belonged to the best and highest society; he was gay, brave, witty, and an excellent companion; he gave famous bachelors' dinners, and after dinner he took every bet his guests chose to propose. What needed he to do more? The women adored him, and he could boast the most unvaried success in all his love affairs; he was young and handsome, gallant and magnificient on all occasions where a man could be so with women of good society; in fact, the infatuation was such, that even the very mystery thrown over the source of the Pactolus from which he derived his golden supplies, threw a certain attractive charm about his life. It was said by some: "In fact, this devil of a de Saint-Remy must surely have discovered the philosopher's stone!" When it was reported that he was appointed to the French legation, to the court of the grand duke of Gerolstein, there were some who deemed that M. de Saint-Remy wished to make an honourable retreat. Such was M. de Saint-Remy.

The ambassador, as he now presented M. de Saint-Remy to Rodolph, said: "I have the honour to present to your highness, the Viscount de Saint-Remy, attached to the legation of Gerolstein."

The viscount bowed low, and said: "Will your highness deign to forgive my impatience to pay my respects? I have perhaps been too hasty to enjoy an honour, to which I attach so much value."

"I shall be happy, sir, to welcome you to Gerolstein. Do you purpose going their soon?"

"The stay of your highness at Paris renders me less anxious to set out."

"The peaceful contrast of our German courts will, I fear, scarcely accord with your taste, accustomed as you are to the life and gaiety of Paris."

"I venture to assure your royal highness, that the kindness you now condescend to show me, and the continuance of which I venture to hope for, would alone suffice to prevent me from regretting Paris."

"As far as depends upon me, sir, you shall have no cause to alter your opinion during your stay at Gerolstein."

Rodolph, by a slight inclination of the head, announced that the presentation was over, upon which the viscount bowed and retired.

The prince, a practised physiognomist, was subject to antipathies and sympathies which were almost always justified by the event. From the few words that he had exchanged with M. de Saint-Remy, Rodolph experienced an unaccountable aversion to him: to his eye, the handsome features wore a perfidious aspect, and danger seemed to lurk beneath the smooth and polished manners.

We shall hereafter meet M. de Saint-Remy, under circumstances which will terribly contrast with the brilliant position that he occupied when presented to Rodolph, and then a judgment can be formed as to the value of the prince's presentiments.

The presentation over, Rodolph, reflecting on the strange rencontres that chance had brought about, returned to the winter garden. The time for supper had arrived, and the saloons were nearly deserted. The most private spot in the hot-house was at the foot of one of the clumps of trees, at the angle of a wall; and an enormous banana, thickly covered with climbing plants, effectually concealed a small side-door, which led to the banquetting-room by a long corridor. The door, which was close by the trees, had been left ajar.

Hidden beneath this verdant screen, Rodolph seated himself, and became lost in a deep reverie, when his name, spoken by a well-known voice, caused him to start. Sarah, seated on the opposite side of the tree which concealed Rodolph, was conversing in English with her brother Tom. The prince listened attentively to the following dialogue:—

"The marquise is gone for a moment to the ball of the Baron de Nerval," said Sarah; "fortunately she was obliged to retire without having any opportunity of speaking to Rodolph, who was in search of her; for I fear the influence that he might exercise over her, unknown to himself—an influence that I have already had so much trouble even partially to combat. At length this

rival, this marquise, whom, by her sentiment, I have always so much dreaded—and who, by-and-by, might so much embarrass my plans—at length, to-morrow, will be ruined. Listen to me, brother, for this is important."

"You are mistaken; Rodolph never loved the marquise."

"It is time," said Sarah, "that I should give you some explanations upon that subject. Many things have happened during your last absence, and as it is necessary to act earlier than I anticipated—this very night, as soon as we leave here—this conversation is indispensable. Happily we are quite alone."

"Proceed—I am all attention."

"Until she saw Rodolph, Clémence d'Harville, I am quite convinced of it, had never loved. I know not why it is that she feels so much aversion for her husband, who adores her; it is a mystery which I have vainly endeavoured to penetrate. The sight of Rodolph excited in the heart of Clémence a thousand new and delightful emotions; but I stifled her growing attachment by certain disclosures, or rather calumnies, which I invented against the prince. However, love was awakened in her, and her heart required some object to fill the void that I had occasioned there, and having, at my parties, met with M. Charles Robert, she was struck with his beauty, just as one is at the sight of a splendid picture. Unfortunately, this man is as silly as he is handsome; but there is something very touching in his glance. I exalted the nobleness of his character, the loftiness of his soul. I coloured him as being oppressed by the most interesting sufferings; I directed him to be always of a most doleful and pitiable melancholy, to proceed only by sighs, and, above all, not to utter a single word that was not absolutely indispensable. He has followed my advice. Thanks to his talent as a singer, to his countenance, and especially to his incurable melancholy, he has engaged the sympathy of Madame d'Harville, and won from her that warm regard which Rodolph had first awakened. Do you now understand me?"

"Perfectly—go on."

"Robert and Madame d'Harville have seen each other upon terms of intimacy only at my house, where, the more effectually to carry out my projects, I devoted two mornings in the week to music; on one of these occasions my mournful friend whispered some impassioned words, and glided a few tender billets into the fair hand of the marquise. I had more terror of his writing than even of his words, but a woman is always indulgent towards the first declaration of love that she receives, and those of my pupil, from their brevity, did him no harm. The most important thing was to obtain for him an interview, which was no easy matter, for this little marquise had more principle than love; or rather, she had not enough love to cause her to sacrifice her principles. Unknown to herself, she preserved in the depths of her heart the image of Rodolph, which, so to speak, watched over her and opposed her weak fancy for M. Charles Robert—a fancy, be it said, far more fictitious than real, and chiefly kept up by her lively interest in his imaginary sufferings, and by my incessant and exaggerated laudation of that brainless Apollo. At length Clémence, vanquished by the deeply despairing air of her unhappy adorer, decided, one day, upon granting him the long-desired rendezvous."

"Did she, then, make you her confidant?"

"She confessed to me her attachment for M. Charles Robert, nothing more. I took no pains to learn more, for it would only have annoyed her. But he, delighted, intoxicated with happiness, or rather with pride, told me of his success, but not intrusting to me the secret of either the time or the place of meeting."

"Then how did you know that?"

"Karl, by my orders, went the next day, and placed himself, at an early hour, near the door of M. Robert; nothing, however, took place till the following day, when our lover took a hackney-coach, which set him down at a shabby house in the Rue du Temple. At this house he remained for about an hour and a half, and then departed. Karl waited a long time to see if any one followed M. Charles Robert out of the house, but no one came—the marquise had broken her promise. This I learned on the following day from her lover, who was furious at the disappointment. I advised him to exhibit increased wretchedness and despair. The pity of Clémence was moved once more, a new assignation was extorted from her—but as vainly as the former She a third time appointed to meet him, and now actually went as far as the door; but repented, and came away without quitting the coach in which she rode. You may see by all this, how this woman struggles. And why? Because I am sure (and that is the cause of my deep hatred to Clémence) that her heart is still filled with the thought of Rodolph, and that thought protected her. At last, this very evening, the marquise has made an appointment with M. Robert for to-morrow; and this time, I have no doubt that she will go. The Duke de Lucenay has so grossly ridiculed the young man, that, overwhelmed by the humiliation of her admirer, the marquise has granted to pity what, but for it, she most probably would have continued to deny; and this time, I repeat it to you, I have no doubt that she will keep her promise."

"What, then, are your plans?"

"M. Charles Robert is so little capable of appreciating the delicacy of the sentiment which this evening dictated the determination of the marquise, that, to-morrow, he will so positively insist upon profiting by the appointment, that he will completely ruin himself with Clémence, who has resigned herself to this compromising step without passion, and solely from pity. I know her so well, that I have no doubt she will go to the place of meeting, from a courageous idea of kindness, but perfectly calm, and with a firm resolve not for an instant to forget her duties. M. Charles Robert is too vulgar and sensual to conceive this, and will take every advantage of the favour thus conceded to him; from that instant the marquise will take an aversion to him, and, the illusion once destroyed, she will again fall under the influence of her regard for Rodolph, which I am quite sure lies buried in the depths of her heart."

"Well?"

"Well, I wish her to be for ever lost to Rodolph. I, for my part, have no doubt that, sooner or later, he would betray his friendship for M. d'Harville, by responding to the passion of Clémence; but he will hold her in utter horror and detestation, if he believes her guilty of a crime in which he is not the participator; that, in the eyes of a man, is ever unpardonable."

"Then, you would inform the husband of what

[The Bedchamber Scene.]

is going on, that the prince may, from the exposure which will ensue, become acquainted with the disgraceful circumstances?"

"Yes, and the thing is made all the easier to accomplish, from my having learned from Clémence, that the marquis has suspicions already, without being able to fix them on any particular person. It is now midnight, we shall presently quit the ball; you will alight from the carriage at the first café we reach, and write to inform M. d'Harville that his wife has an amorous appointment for one o'clock to-morrow, at No. 17, Rue du Temple. He is jealous—he will surprise Clémence, and the rest you can guess."

"It is an abominable action," said Seyton, coldly.

"You are scrupulous, brother. If my modes of action are odious—so be it; I trample on whatever opposes my wishes and designs—granted. But how have I been treated? Who thought of scruples when my ruin was sought? Do you refuse me, then?"

"Just now, I will do whatever you wish; but I repeat, that it is an abominable action."

"But you consent, nevertheless?"

"Yes; this night, M. d'Harville will learn all. And then—but I fancy I hear some one behind the clump of trees," said Seyton, interrupting himself, and speaking to Sarah in a suppressed tone. "I thought I heard a noise."

"Quick then," said Sarah, anxiously—"quick, and assure yourself!"

Seyton rose, and went completely round the clump of trees, but discovered no one. Rodolph had retreated by the little side-door, of which we lately spoke.

"I was mistaken," said Seyton, when he had completed his search; "there was no one there."

"I thought not."

"Hear me, Sarah—I do not think the marquise

is so dangerous to your future designs as you suppose. The prince has certain fixed principles, which nothing can induce him to infringe. The young girl whom he, disguised as a working-man, conducted about six weeks ago to the farm, she whom he has surrounded with cares and attentions, to whom he is giving education, and whom he has several times been to visit, seems to me to be an object of far greater apprehension. We know not who or what she is, though she seems to belong to an obscure class of society; but the rare beauty with which she is said to be endowed, the disguise which the prince adopted in order to take her to the village, and the increasing interest he displays for her, all prove that his attachment is not without danger, and I have, therefore, anticipated your wishes with respect to her. To remove from your path this, and, as I think, far the greater obstacle, it was necessary to act with an extreme prudence, to obtain the best possible information about the farm people, and about the house, and the habits of the girl herself. This information I have procured, and the moment for action has arrived. Chance has thrown again into my way that horrible one-eyed old wretch who had kept my address; and her connexion with men of the stamp of him by whom we were attacked on the night of your visit to the City, will be of immense service to us. Everything has been foreseen and provided for; whatever may happen, there can be no proof against us. Moreover, if, as appears to be the case, this creature belongs to the working-classes, she will not hesitate between our offers and the most brilliant condition that she can possibly, at present, dream of, for the prince has preserved a profound incognito. But to-morrow this question shall be solved, if not—we shall see, we shall see."

"These two obstacles removed, Tom, then for our grand project!"

"It presents difficulties; but they may be overcome."

"And will it not be doubly fortunate if we can accomplish it at the moment when Rodolph will be doubly oppressed by the scandal of the conduct of Madame d'Harville, and by the disappearance of the creature in whom he takes so much interest? Ah! then would be the time to urge upon him the belief that the daughter whom he so much deplores, still lives! and——"

"Silence, sister!" said Tom Seyton, interrupting Sarah; "the company are retiring from the supper table. Since you think it will be useful to warn the Marquis d'Harville of to-morrow's rendezvous, let us go, for it is late."

"The late hour at which this information will reach the marquis, will be a strong argument in favour of its truth." And thus saying, Tom and Sarah quitted the hall of the ambassadress at the court of * * *.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

DETERMINED, at whatever cost, to warn Madame d'Harville of the danger that threatened her, Rodolph had quitted the winter garden without waiting to hear the conclusion of the conversation between Sarah and her brother, and was, consequently, ignorant of the plot formed against Fleur-de-Marie, and the imminent peril which threatened the poor girl. But spite of his determination, Rodolph could not meet with Madame d'Harville, as he had hoped and expected, for she, on leaving the ambassador's, was so overcome by her emotions, that she was obliged to abandon her intention of proceeding to the entertainment given by Madame de Nerval, and go direct home.

This *contretemps* ruined all. Baron de Graün, with most of the company present at the ambassador's ball, had been invited to that of Madame de Nerval, and Rodolph, taking the baron with him, drove rapidly thither in his carriage, and desired him to inform Madame d'Harville that the prince wished to speak to her that very night, on business of the utmost importance, and that he would wait at the gates of her house, and speak to her at the carriage door, while her servants were preparing for her admission.

After much time spent in vainly seeking the marquise in the crowded rooms, the baron returned to Rodolph with the information of his failure. Rodolph was now in despair; he had wisely judged that it was before all things necessary to forewarn the marquise of the treachery intended against her, as in that case the denunciation of Sarah, which he could not prevent, would pass for a base and contemptible calumny. It was too late; the infamous letter dictated by the Countess Macgregor, was delivered to the Marquis d'Harville shortly after twelve on the night in question.

* * *

It was daybreak on that morning, and the Marquis d'Harville continued to pace slowly up and down his bedchamber, which was furnished with elegant simplicity, its chief ornaments consisting of a stand of valuable modern arms and a well-assorted collection of books. The bed had evidently not been used during the night, and yet the silken counterpane was torn to fragments. Disorder had usurped the place of quiet elegance. A chair and a small ebony table were thrown down near the hearth; and the carpet, strewn with the fragments of a crystal goblet, half-crushed wax-lights, and a massive silver chandelier, gave evidence of a fearful and violent scene.

M. d'Harville was about thirty years of age; his countenance was masculine, and usually wore a mild and prepossessing expression, but it was now contracted, pale, and haggard. He still wore his evening dress; his throat was bare, his waistcoat wide open; his shirt was torn, and spotted here and there with blood. His brown hair, which usually hung in curls, fell stiff and lank upon his livid brow. After having for some time walked up and down the room, with his arms folded, his head depressed, and his glance fixed and bloodshotten, he suddenly stopped before the hearth, which was fireless, though the night had been severe. Reaching from the chimney-piece the letter which he had received on the preceding night, he re-opened it with a devouring attention, and read by the pale and yellow light of the early winter's morning: "To-morrow, at one o'clock, your wife will go to No. 17, Rue du Temple, to meet her favoured lover. Follow her, and you will know all."

Whilst reading these lines, already perused so often, each time with increased anguish, during the long hours of that bitter night, the blue, cold lips of the Marquis d'Harville appeared convulsively to spell each word of this fatal communication.

At this moment, the door opened, and a servant entered the room. This man, already old and grey-headed, had a kindly and honest countenance. The marquis hastily turned his head, with-

out, otherwise changing his posture, still holding the letter in his hands, and said in a stern voice: "What do you want?"

Instead of replying, the servant gazed with a sort of painful stupefaction at the disorder of the room; then looking attentively at his master, he exclaimed: "Blood on your shirt! My lord, you are hurt, then? And alone too! Why did you not, as usual, ring for me, when you felt the approach of these ——"

"Begone!"

"Pardon me, my lord, you must not think of it; your fire is out, and the cold is intense—and, especially after your ——"

"Be silent! Leave me, I say!"

"But, my lord," replied the faithful servant, trembling as he spoke, "you appointed that M. Doublet should be here at half-past ten o'clock this morning, and he is now waiting with the notary."

"True!" said the marquis, bitterly. "When one is rich, one must look after one's affairs. Fortune is such a fine thing, truly!" Then, assuming somewhat of his ordinary manner, he added: "Shew M. Doublet into my study."

"He is there, my lord."

"Give me my clothes—quick! Presently I shall go out ——"

"But, my lord ——"

"Do as I tell you, Joseph," said M. d'Harville, in a milder tone. Then he added. "Is my lady stirring yet?"

"I believe her ladyship has not yet rung her bell, my lord."

"Let me be informed when she does so."

"Yes, my lord."

"Heavens, man!" said the marquis, impatiently, "tell Henry to come and assist you to dress me; you will never have done!"

"But pray, my lord, first allow me, at least, to put things in order here," said Joseph, sadly; "because all this would be perceived in an instant, and might lead to false suspicions as to what has taken place to-night."

"And if they knew it—it would be frightful, would it not?" said the marquis, in a tone of painful raillery.

"Ah, my lord, God be praised, no one has yet the least suspicion ——"

"No one! oh, no—no one suspects it!" replied the marquis, gloomily.

While Joseph busied himself in repairing the disorder of the room, the marquis went up to the stand of arms before mentioned; after examining them attentively, he turned to Joseph with a sinister gesture, and said: "I hope you have not omitted to clean the guns at the top of the case—I mean the fowling-pieces?"

"Your lordship gave me no orders about them," said the astonished servant.

"I did, sir, but you have forgotten it."

"I humbly protest to your lordship ——"

"A pretty condition they must be in, truly."

"It is barely a month, my lord, since they were sent home from the gunsmith."

"No matter, I must look over my guns as soon as I am dressed—I may require them to-morrow."

The room being put into an orderly state, a second servant entered to assist Joseph to dress the marquis, who, finishing his toilette, proceeded to his study, where his steward (M. Doublet) and a notary's clerk were awaiting him.

"The clerk has brought the deed, that my lord marquis may hear it read over," said the steward; "after which, nothing more than your lordship's signature is required to complete it."

"Have you perused it, M. Doublet?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Oh, that is enough; I will sign it at once."

The customary forms completed, the notary's clerk took his departure.

"With this acquisition, my lord," said M. Doublet, triumphantly, "your annual income from good and handsome manorial property is not less than a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs! Are you aware, my lord, that it is no very common thing to have a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs in land?"

"Ah! I am a happy man, am I not? A hundred and twenty-six thousand francs in land! What felicity can be equal to that? What can I want beside?"

"Without reckoning my lord marquis's funded property, or taking into account ——"

"Oh! exactly," interrupted M. d'Harville; "and without counting or including several other small matters of felicity to which I may lay claim."

"Heaven be praised, my lord, in truth you want nothing—youth, wealth, kindly feeling, health, in a word, all blessings united; and, among them, or rather at the head of them," said Doublet, smiling pleasantly, "I will venture to mention, that of being the husband of madame the marquise, and the parent of a lovely little daughter, who resembles a cherub."

M. d'Harville cast a sinister, gloomy look upon the steward; and with an expression of wild irony, far beyond the power of description, tapping M. Doublet familiarly on the shoulder, he said: "Ah, then, with a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs for an income, such a wife as mine, and a little daughter like a cherub, there can be nothing more wanted?"

"Nay, my lord," replied the honest steward, "there still remains to wish for the blessings of long life, that you may see your daughter married, and be a grandfather. That you may be a grandfather, is my hearty wish, as it is that Madame the Marquise be grandmother, and great-grandmother!"

"Oh! this is excellent, M. Doublet. He is thinking of Baucis and Philemon. Certainly, it is remarkably appropriate."

"My lord, you are too kind! Have you any further orders for me?"

"No. Oh, stay—yes. How much ready money have you in hand?"

"Nineteen thousand three hundred and odd francs for current expenses, my lord—without reckoning what is at the banker's."

"Bring me ten thousand francs in gold, in the course of this morning; should I be out, leave them with Joseph."

"This morning?"

"Yes, this morning."

"The money shall be here within an hour. Anything further, my lord?"

"No, Monsieur Doublet."

"A hundred and twenty-six thousand in rent of land," repeated the steward, as he quitted the room; "this is a fortunate day for me: I was much afraid that this property, so advantageous for us, would have escaped us after all. Your servant, my lord marquis."

"Good morning," replied the marquis, as the door closed upon the steward, and M. d'Harville sank back upon his library chair, overwhelmed with painful and hitherto hidden emotions.

Leaning upon his bureau, and covering his face with his hands, he now wept long and bitterly—the first tears that he had shed since he received the fatal letter.

"Oh, what a bitter mockery of fate," he at length exclaimed, "to make me rich! What now can I put within the golden frame? My shame—the infamy of Clémence!—the disgrace which will be reflected upon my innocent child! Exposure! ought I to resolve upon it, or, for the sake of her unoffending offspring, ought I to have pity on ——" Then suddenly rising, his eyes flashing, and his teeth clenched, he cried, in a hollow and determined tone: "No, no!—blood, blood! The terrible prevents the ridiculous! Now, oh! yes, *now* I can understand her coldness, her aversion to me, wretched, wretched woman!" Then, stopping suddenly, as if struck by some tender recollection, he said: "Her aversion! Oh! I too well know the cause of that—I fill her with horror and alarm! Yet is that *my* fault? Should she wrong me on that account! Instead of hatred, do I not rather merit pity?" Then, with increased excitement, he added: "No, no, no! blood, blood! nothing but blood for both, for no doubt she has told *all* to HIM!"

This latter thought redoubled the fury of the marquis. He raised his clenched and trembling hands towards heaven, then passing his burning fingers over his eyes, he reflected upon the necessity of appearing calm in the presence of his servants, and returned to his bed-room in a state of comparative tranquillity. There he found Joseph.

"Well! the fowling-pieces, in what state are they?"

"Here they are, my lord; they are all in excellent order."

"I'll try them. Has your lady yet rung her bell?"

"I do not know, my lord."

"Go and inquire."

As soon as the servant left the room, M. d'Harville hastily took from the gun-case that was before him a small powder-flask, some balls, and some caps; locking the case, he put the key in his pocket. Then, going to the end of the room, where his arms were arranged, he selected a pair of short Mantons, loaded them, and, without difficulty, concealed them in the pockets of his morning wrapper. He had scarcely done this, when Joseph returned with the intimation that the marquise was in her dressing-room.

"Has my lady ordered her carriage?"

"No, my lord; I heard Mademoiselle Juliette mention to the coachman, when he came for orders, that, as it is cold and dry, her ladyship, if she goes out, will go on foot."

"Very well. Stay—I forgot. If I go out shooting, it will be to-morrow, or probably the next day. Tell William to look to the little green britska, this morning; you understand me?"

"Yes, my lord. But will not your lordship want your walking-cane?"

"No. Tell me, is there not a coach-stand near here?"

"Close by, my lord; at the corner of the Rue de Lille."

After a moment of hesitation and silence, the marquis continued: "Go and inquire of Mademoiselle Juliette, if Madame d'Harville can be seen just now." Joseph left the room.

"Yes," said the marquis, with an air of desperate gaiety, "it will be just as good as any other piece of acting. Oh, yes! I will visit her, and watch the gentle and perfidious mask beneath which this wretch is doubtless meditating her adulterous designs; I will listen to the falsehoods that issue from her lips, while I pitilessly read the very depths of her false heart. Ah! it is appalling to gaze on one who will look at you, speak to you, answer you, and, in an instant afterwards, sully your name with one of those horrible stains which can only be washed away with blood. Fool that I am, thus to trust my senses! She will look at me with her accustomed sweetness and candour, and greet me with the same pure smile that she bestows upon her daughter when she hears her lisp her prayers, and kisses her snowy brow. The eyes the mirror of the soul! Alas! the more modest and pure the look, the more false and corrupt the heart. *She* is a proof of it—and I have been fool enough to be her dupe! Oh, fury! oh, madness! With what cool and insolent contempt she must have looked at me through that lying mirror, when, at the very moment, perhaps, when she was going to meet THE OTHER, I heaped upon her new proofs of my tenderness and esteem! While I spoke to her as a young, chaste, and devoted mother, in whom I had treasured up all the happiness and the hope of my whole life! No, no, no—I will not see her! I will neither see her nor my child, or I shall betray myself, and compromise my just vengeance."

On leaving his apartment, M. d'Harville, instead of going to that of the marquise, merely said to her maid: "You will tell Madame d'Harville, that I wish to speak to her this morning; but I am obliged to go out for a little while; I shall return about noon, when, if it is perfectly convenient to the marquise, I will breakfast with her."

"Thinking that I intend to return," thought the unhappy M. d'Harville, "she will probably fancy herself all the more at liberty to pursue her own plans."

On reaching the coach-stand contiguous to his mansion, the marquis got into a coach, saying: "I take you by the hour, coachman."

"Very well, sir; it is now half-past eleven. Which way?"

"Drive to the corner of the Rue Saint Dominique, pull up, and wait by the garden wall there."

"Yes, sir."

M. d'Harville pulled down the blinds. The coach went on, and soon arrived almost opposite to the Hotel d'Harville, at which point the marquis was so placed, that no one could enter or quit his house unseen by him. The rendezvous, according to the note, was appointed for one o'clock. With his eyes fixed stedfastly upon his own door, the marquis waited, in anxious and maddening suspense. His thoughts were whirled along by such a torrent of frightful feelings, that the time seemed to him to pass with an incredible rapidity. Twelve o'clock struck from the dome of St. Thomas Aquinas, when the door of the marquis's house was slowly opened, and Madame d'Harville stepped timidly into the street.

"Already!" exclaimed the wretched husband. "Ah! how attentive she is! She fears to keep THE OTHER waiting," said the marquis to himself, with a savage irony.

The air was piercing cold, and the pavement quite dry. Clémence wore a black velvet bonnet, with a blonde veil of the same colour, and a rich

pelisse of dark satin. Her immense cashmere shawl, of deep blue, descended almost to the hem of her pelisse, which she lightly and gracefully raised as she walked. Thanks to this, the small taper foot and graceful ancle of Madame d'Harville, encased in a well-fitting satin boot, were exposed to view.

It was strange, yet in spite of the painful and bewildering ideas which crowded the brain of M. d'Harville, he had noticed his wife's foot, and, at that moment, to his eager gaze, that foot and ancle had never looked so charming. The sight maddened him; by a rapid train of thought, he recalled the matchless loveliness of his wife, and, as he ever believed, till now, her purity, her mental graces; he groaned aloud, as he remembered that another was preferred to him, and that the graceful being on whom his eyes were fixed, was but the hollow spectre of fallen goodness, a lost, degraded creature, hastening to steep her husband and child in eternal disgrace, for the sake of indulging a base and guilty passion. Even in that wretched moment he felt how dearly, how entirely he had loved her; and, for the first time during the blow which had fallen on him, he felt that he mourned the lovely woman almost equally with the virtuous mother and chaste wife. A low cry of mingled fury and rage escaped him, as he pictured the rapture of her meeting with the lover of her choice, and a sharp, penetrating pain quivered in his heart, as he remembered that Clémence, with all her youth and beauty, her countless charms, both of body and mind, was lost to him for ever.

Hitherto his soul alone had been tortured; because, until now, he had thought only of the sanctity of outraged duties. This impression was so cruel and so bewildering, that, as he half raised the blind, he could with difficulty conceal the agitation of his voice, as he said: "Coachman, you see that lady in the blue shawl and black bonnet, who is walking before us, beside the wall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Follow her, at a walking pace. Should she take a coach at the next stand, stop till her coach goes on, then follow it."

"Yes, sir," said the coachman; "I understand. Ah, come—here's to be some sport!"

In fact, Madame d'Harville, as soon as she reached the coach-stand, did call a coach, got in, and drove off, closely followed by the vehicle containing her husband.

They had not proceeded far, when the coachman took the road to the church of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and, to the surprise of M. d'Harville, stopped exactly in front of it.

"Well! what are you doing now?"

"Why, master, the lady has got down at the church; and, I am blowed if she hasn't got a tarnation pretty little leg! Ha, ha! this is downright good sport!"

A thousand conflicting thoughts now agitated M. d'Harville. At first, he fancied that his wife, fearing that she was followed, wished to baffle pursuit. Then, again, he reflected that, after all, perhaps the letter which he had received was only an infamous calumny. If Clémence were guilty, what could she gain by this false assumption of piety? Would it not be a sacrilegious mockery? For an instant, a bright ray of hope shot across his mind, so great was the contrast between this piety and the abominable crime of which his wife was accused. But, alas! this consoling allusion was of short duration. The coachman leant back on his seat, and said to him: "Master, the little lady is getting into her coach again."

"Then follow her."

"Yes, master. Ha, ha! Rare fun, this! Very first-rate, indeed!"

The coach reached the Quais, the Hotel de Ville, the Rue Sainte-Avoye, and, at length, the Rue du Temple.

"Master," said the coachman, turning round to the marquis, "the other one has stopped at No. 17—we are at 13 now; shall we stop where we are?"

"Yes."

"Master," said the coachman again, "the little lady has gone into the alley of No. 17."

"Let me out."

"Yes, master."

In a few seconds the Marquis d'Harville had entered the alley, following the footsteps of his wife, who had already gone into the house.

Urged by curiosity, Madame Pipelet, her dear, melancholy Alfred, and the oyster-woman, were assembled at the door of the porter's lodge. The staircase of this house was so dark, that, on reaching it from without, one could scarcely discern it; and the Marquise d'Harville, sinking with fear, compelled to address Madame Pipelet, said to her, in a broken and scarcely audible tone: "Madam, which is the staircase?"

"Stop a moment; who might you happen to want, madam?"

"I wish to go to the apartment of M. Charles, madam."

"Monsieur who?" replied the old woman, pretending not to have understood her, in order that dear Alfred and the oyster-woman might have sufficient leisure thoroughly to examine the features of the unfortunate lady, through the folds of her thick veil.

"I asked for M. Charles, madam," replied Clémence, in a voice still more agitated than before, and hanging down her head, to conceal her features from the gaze of familiar and insolent curiosity to which she was subjected.

"Ah! M. Charles—very good; you spoke so low, that I could not hear you. Well, my little lady, as you want M. Charles, and a very handsome young man he is, go straight up; his door is opposite to you on the first-floor."

The marquise, overwhelmed with confusion, placed her foot on the first stair.

"Eh, eh, eh!" added the old woman, chuckling; "it seems it's all right to-day! Marriage for ever, say I!"

"The commandant has a tidy taste, though, Madame Pipelet," said the oyster-woman: "she's a nice delicate little body, that!"

Had it not been for the necessity of again passing the lodge, which was occupied by these creatures, Madame d'Harville, half dead with terror and shame, would have retraced her steps on the instant. By another desperate effort she reached the landing-place, where, to her unutterable astonishment, she found herself face to face with Rodolph, who, putting a purse into her hands, hastily said to her: "Your husband knows all, and is following you——"

At this instant, the shrill voice of Madame Pipelet was heard, exclaiming: "Where are you going, sir?"

"It is he!" exclaimed Rodolph, who, almost forcing Madame d'Harville towards the stairs of the second-floor, rapidly added: "Go up to the fifth-floor, and say that you have come

to relieve an unfortunate family, named Morel ——"

"Sir, you shall pass over my body, as they trampled upon our brave men at Waterloo, rather than go up stairs before you tell me whom you want!" screamed Madame Pipelet, as she stopped M. d'Harville.

Seeing, from the end of the alley, his wife stop to speak to the porteress, the marquis had adopted the same course.

"I am accompanying the lady who just now went up stairs," said the marquis.

"Oh, that's a very different thing!" replied Madame Pipelet, making way for him to pass.

Having heard an unusual bustle, M. Charles Robert had half opened his door; Rodolph hastily entered the commandant's apartment, and closed the door upon them both, at the very instant that M. d'Harville reached the landing-place. The prince fearing that, in spite of the darkness, the marquis might recognise him, he seized upon this opportunity to avoid coming in contact with him. M. Charles Robert, magnificently attired in his gorgeously-flowered morning-gown of scarlet damask, and his Greek cap of embroidered velvet, stood for an instant completely stupefied at the sight of Rodolph, whom he had not seen at the embassy on the preceding evening, and who, at this moment, was somewhat more than plainly dressed.

"Sir," said the commandant, angrily, "what means this?"

"Silence!" said Rodolph, in a low but imperative tone, and with such an expression of actual agony in his features, that the commandant was silent.

A loud, continued noise, like that of a body falling and rolling down several stairs, disturbed the silence of the gloomy staircase.

"The unfortunate man!—he has murdered her!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Murdered! whom? What then is going on?" said M. Charles Robert, turning very pale.

Without replying to this inquiry, Rodolph partially opened the door, and saw little Tortillard hastily hopping down the stairs, having in his hand the purse that Rodolph had given to Madame d'Harville. In another instant, Tortillard had disappeared. The light footstep of Madame d'Harville, and the heavier one of her husband, who continued to follow her to the upper apartment of the house, could be distinctly heard.

Reassured of the safety of Madame d'Harville, but not comprehending by what chance the purse recently entrusted to her had been transferred to the hands of Tortillard, Rodolph said to M. Robert, with an air of authority: "Do not leave your room for the next hour, at least!"

"Upon my honour, this is a pretty thing to say to a gentleman in his own house! And, pray who are you, that you dare to dictate thus to me? What the devil does it all mean?" cried M. Charles Robert, in an impatient and angry tone.

"M. d'Harville knows all; he has followed his wife to your very door, and he is at this instant following her up stairs."

"Ah, my God! here's a predicament!" exclaimed M. Charles Robert, clasping his hands in terror; "but what then can she want at the top of the house, and how will she manage to return without being observed?"

"Remain quietly where you are, until the porteress comes to you," said Rodolph, who hastened to the lodge, leaving the commandant in a state of the most alarming apprehension.

"Well, tell me then," said Madame Pipelet, with a chuckling delight: "it gets hotter and hotter. There is a gentleman following the little lady. No doubt, he is the *yellow stocking*—the husband; I guessed that at once, and so I let him go up. There will be murder done between him and the commandant, and that will make a noise, and whole crowds will come to see the house, as they went to see No. 16, where a man was killed."

"My dear Madame Pipelet, will you do me a service?" said Rodolph. Putting five louis into the old woman's hand, he added: "When the little lady comes down stairs, ask her how the poor Morels are going on; tell her that she does a real charity in assisting them, as she promised, when she called on you to make some inquiries respecting them.

Madame Pipelet, stupefied, looked first at the money, and then at Rodolph.

"How, sir! this gold is for me—and this little lady—she is not with the commandant?"

The gentleman who follows her is her husband; but, being warned in time, the poor lady has gone up to the Morels, as if she came here for the sole purpose of succouring them. Do you understand?"

"Do I understand? to be sure I do. I am to help to gammon the husband. Get along, do. Lord bless you, you couldn't have come to a better. Would not one suppose now, that I had done nothing all my life but deceive a husband?"

Here the enormous hat of M. Pipelet was observed to throw its dark shodow across the floor of the lodge.

"Anastasia," said Alfred, gravely, "have you then, like Cæsar Bradamanti, no respect for anything or anybody that is sacred here on earth? There are things that should not be the subject of a jest, even in the charm of intimacy."

"Go along, you dear old creature, and don't roll your eyes about like billiard-balls; you may very plainly see that I only joke. Do you not know, that there is no one on earth who can boast of having—but, no matter. If I serve this young woman, it is for the purpose of serving our excellent lodger, who, for his generosity, may well deserve to be called the king of lodgers." Then, turning to Rodolph, she said: "You shall see how I'll work the oracle! Will you just stand there, behind the curtain? Quick, quick! here they come."

Rodolph hastily hid himself in the corner pointed out by Madame Pipelet. M. and Madame d'Harville descended; the marquis gave his arm to his wife. When they arrived in front of the lodge, the features of M. d'Harville expressed a deep happiness, mingled with astonishment and confusion. Clémence was calm and pale.

"Well, my kind-hearted lady?" cried Madame Pipelet, stepping out of the lodge, "have you seen those poor Morels? Is it not enough to break one's heart? Ah! I assure you, it is a real charity to aid them. The last time you were here, when you came to inquire about them, I told you that they were much to be pitied. Oh! depend upon it, you cannot do too much for such worthy people. Don't you agree with me, Alfred?"

Alfred, whose notions of prudence, as well as his natural integrity, revolted at the thought of

aiding to deceive a husband, replied by an unintelligible grunt, as vague as discordant.

"Pray excuse my husband, madam," resumed Madame Pipelet; "he has the cramp in his stomach, which makes him speak so that you can't understand him, or he would tell you as I do, that these poor creatures will pray to the Almighty to bless you, my worthy lady!"

M. d'Harville looked at his wife with admiration, and said: "An angel! an angel! oh, what a frightful calumny!"

"An angel!" repeated Madame Pipelet; "you are right, sir; and an angel of God, too!"

"Pray let us go," said Madame d'Harville, who felt that she was on the point of fainting under the excessive emotion which she had endured from the moment that she entered that house.

"Let us go, then," said the marquis; and, as they passed from the gloomy alley, he added: "Clémence, how much do I need your pardon and your pity!"

"Alas!" said she, sighing deeply, "who does not need pardon?"

Rodolph now left his retreat, deeply moved by this scene of the terrible mixed with the ridiculous—this odd termination of a mysterious drama, which had brought into play so many different passions.

"Well now," said Madame Pipelet, "I hope I played my part well, eh?" Poor dear man, he should put his wife in a glass case now! But, about your furniture, M. Rodolph; it has not come yet."

"I am going to see about it. And, by the by, you can now tell the commandant that he may come down."

"True. What a lark, eh? The poor commandant seems to have hired his apartment for the King of Prussia! Serves him right too, with his shabby twelve francs a month! This is the fourth time he has been made a fool of."

Rodolph left the house, and Madame Pipelet, turning to her husband, said with a chuckle: "Now, Alfred, let's have a turn with the commandant, eh?—what say you? Let's have a jolly good laugh at the mucky swell, with his fine gown and cap—and all for nothing!" And she went up stairs, and rang the bell of M. Charles Robert, who anxiously opened the door to her.

"Commandant!" said the gentle Anastasia, carrying her hand to her wig in the true military style, "you are freed from arrest. They have gone off, arm-in-arm, the husband and the wife, under your very nose. However, you have to thank M. Rodolph, that you have escaped a rare mess. You owe him something handsome, I guess."

"Is that slender gentleman, with moustaches, M. Rodolph, then?"

"Yes."

"And who and what is that man?"

"That man," returned Madame Pipelet, in an angry tone, "is as good as another—as two others! He is a travelling clerk, who lodges in this house, who has but one apartment; but he is not stingy—not he! He gave me six francs for attending upon him—ay, and at the first offer too. Six francs without bating. Only think of that! He is something like a lodger! I only wish some people that I know were like him."

"Very well, very well; take my key."

"Shall we light the fire to-morrow, commandant?"

"No."

"The day after?"

"No."

"Well, commandant, do you remember, I told you that you would never make your market of her, and that you would only get your trouble for your pains?"

M. Charles Robert cast a furious look upon the grinning porteress, and rushing past her, left the house, utterly unable to comprehend how a travelling clerk, like M. Rodolph, could have discovered his appointment with the Marquise d'Harville.

At the moment that the commandant left the alley, young Tortillard came hobbling up.

"Well, you bad subject, what do you want?" said Madame Pipelet.

"Has the one-eyed woman been here for me?" demanded the young scamp, without attending to the porteress's question.

"La Chouette? No, you little monster. Why should she come after you?"

"Why, to take me into the country, to be sure," said Tortillard, swinging on the door of the lodge.

"And your master, has he give you leave?"

"My father has asked M. Bradamanti to let me go into the country—the country—the country!" sung, or rather screamed the promising son of M. Bras Rouge, making a tambourine of the window-panes of the lodge.

"Leave off, you little rascal, or you'll break the glass," said Madame Pipelet. "But here is a coach!"

"Ah! good—good! That's La Chouette!" said the urchin. "Oh! what a spree, to go in a coach!"

In fact, even through the window and the red blind, they could discern the hideous profile of La Chouette. She beckoned to Tortillard, who rapidly limped to the coach. The coachman opened the door, and the villanous little cripple got in. La Chouette was not alone. In the other corner of the coach, wrapped in an old cloak, and with his features half hidden by a black silk cap, which descended to his brows, sat the Schoolmaster. His inflamed eyelids permitted one to see two white eyes, so to speak, motionless, and without pupils, which added yet another horror to the spectacle presented by his seamed countenance, rendered all the more hideous from the extreme coldness of the day.

"Come, young-un, sit down upon the *pins* of my man, you will keep him warm!" said the one-eyed woman to Tortillard, who crouched like a dog between the legs of La Chouette and the Schoolmaster.

"Now then, my rum-uns," said the driver, "now for the crib at Bouqueval, is it not, La Chouette? You shall see how I can put 'em along!"

"And, above all," said the Schoolmaster, "good luck to you, keep them on the move, for if they once stop, it's all up with us about getting hold of the girl to-night, which I am most anxious to do."

"All right, blind-un! I'll show you how to *tool* the *prads*. God bless you, they're as lively as kittens."

"Allow me to give you a little bit of advice," said the Schoolmaster.

"What is it then?"

"Why, just give the nags a taste of the whip-cord, and do it handsomely when we come to the barrier, for it is quite as well that we should not

renew our acquaintance with the people there, who have wanted you for a long time past."

"I shall have both eyes open!" said the other, mounting the coach-box.

From the slang that has been used, it will be readily judged that the driver was a robber, and a very fit companion for the Schoolmaster. The coach quitted the Rue du Temple.

Two hours afterwards, at the close of the day, this coach, carrying the Schoolmaster, La Chouette, and Tortillard, stopped in front of a wooden cross, marking out the sunken and lonely bye-road that led to the farm of Bouqueval, where La Goualeuse was living, under the protection of Madame Georges.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN IDYL.

Five o'clock had just sounded from the church steeple of the little village of Bouqueval. The cold was intense, the sky clear; the sun, slowly sinking behind the vast but now leafless woods that crowned the heights of Ecouen, still empurpled the horizon, and threw his pale rays obliquely upon the vast plains, that lay hardened and glittering under thir icy covering.

In the country, each season always has its peculiar charm of aspect. Now, the dazzling snow changes the fields into vast extents of alabaster, shining and splendid in immaculate whiteness, beneath a sky of reddish grey. Then may be seen, as the dusk deepens, climbing the hill or descending into the valley, the belated farmer, hastening towards the snug shelter of his rural home; his horse, his hat, his cloak, all about him is covered with snow. Bitter is the cold, icy and biting is the north wind, and darker and darker grows the advancing night. But below these, in the midst of the leafless trees, the little windows of the farm are brilliantly and cheerfully lighted; and the tall brick chimney throws up a dense column of smoke, that tells the farmer that his arrival is waited for, and will be warmly and affectionately welcomed. The blazing hearth, the rustic supper, and then the pleasant, gossiping hour or two, and the warm and peaceful night that is spent within the house, while without the wind howls and the faithful watch-dogs bay the moon, or answer each other from the adjacent fields.

In the morning, every tree displays its fantastic girandoles of purest crystal, to which the weak rays of the winter's sun give the brightness of the diamond and the varying hues of the prism; while the furrows of the fallow lands are alive with the partridge and the timid hare. Here and there is heard the melancholy tinkling of the bell worn by the leader of the numerous flocks of sheep scattered upon the grassy slopes; while the shepherd, closely wrapped in his dark grey cloak, sings some rustic snatch, as his fingers nimbly weave the light osier basket.

Occasionally the scene becomes more animated. Echo sends from afar the mellowed sounds of the hunting-horn, and the cries of the joyous huntsmen; suddenly, a terrified deer bounds wildly over the hedge, rushes with the whirlwind's speed across the plain, and vanishes from sight in the woody covert that touches the far horizon. The blasts of horns and the barking of dogs come nearer and nearer, more loud and distinct; the white and liver-coloured dogs, in their turn, are seen to dart from the covert of a wood; they course along the earth, sniffing the breeze with eager and expanded nostrils, and pursue with loud cries the scent of the flying deer. After them come the scarlet-coated sportsmen, bending over the necks of their swift steeds, and animating the gallant pack with voice and horn! This noisy whirlwind passes by with the swiftness of lightning; the sounds grow less and less distinct; by degrees, all becomes hushed, and hounds, horses, and hunters, are hidden from view in the mazes of the forest, where the timid stag had fled for refuge. Then the touching and sublime calm of the peaceful scene is restored, the profound silence of the vast plains and the deep stillness of the wide horizons are uninterrupted, save by the monotonous song of some solitary shepherd.

Such pictures, such rustic spots, abounded in the neighbourhood of the village of Bouqueval, situated, in spite of its proximity to Paris, in a sort of desert, which is only to be reached by cross roads. Concealed during summer in the bosom of the deep woods, like some little nest amidst the leaves of the spreading tree, the farm which gave shelter to La Goualeuse was now, in mid-winter, completely bereft of its leafy screen. The course of the little river, hard frozen, looked like a long riband of dead silver unrolled amidst the still green fields, along which some fine cows were slowly returning to their stable. Called home by the approach of evening, flights of pigeons alighted in rapid succession upon the roof of the dove-cote; the immense chesnut-trees, which during the summer shaded the court and the farm buildings, now allowed tiled and thatched roofs, with large verdant patches of moss, to be distinctly seen. A heavy waggon, drawn by three lusty and powerful horses, with thick and glossy coats, that testified at once the abundance of their feeding and the excellence of their grooming, was conveying home wheat in sheaves from one of the stacks on the plain. This heavy vehicle entered the court-yard of the farm of Bouqueval, at the same time that a numerous flock of sheep pressed clamorously and confusedly in by a side entrance.

Men and beasts seemed alike impatient to escape from the cold, and to taste the sweets of shelter and repose; the horses neighed their loud joy at the sight of their well known stables, and the sheep bleated impatiently at the doors of their warm folds; while the labourers, as they tended the dumb creatures committed to their charge, cast many a wistful glance towards the warm kitchen, in which they well knew that skilful hands were preparing for them a warm and profuse supper.

Throughout this farm there prevailed a rare and perfect order, a most minute and unusual attention to cleanliness. Instead of being covered with dry mud, thrown here and there, and exposed to all the changes and inclemencies of the weather, the ploughs, harrows, rollers, and other agricultural implements—many of which were of new invention—were arranged, clean and painted, under a vast shed, into which the carters now also proceeded to put the harness of their horses; spacious and clean, the well gravelled court-yard had none of those heaps of dung, or those puddles of stagnant water, which so commonly disfigure the finest farms of La Beauce and La Brie; and the poultry-yard, surrounded by a green trellis-work, shut in its feathered tenants, except when a little door was opened to allow them to wander to the adjacent fields. Without going too much into detail, however, we may say, in a word, that,

in every respect, this farm was cited, and deservedly cited, in all the country round, as a model farm; as well for the perfect order established there, as for the excellence of its system of agriculture, the consequent abundance of its harvests, and the happiness and good conduct of the numerous persons to whom it furnished employment.

We shall presently have to speak of the cause of this so prosperous superiority; in the mean while, we shall conduct the reader to the trellised gate of the poultry-yard, which was in no respect inferior to the rest of the farm in the rustic elegance of its roosts, its nests, and its little canal edged with rock-stones, in which there constantly ran clear and living water, which even in this severe weather was carefully kept free from ice.

A sudden stir arose among the winged tenants of this charming spot; the fowls, cackling, flew from their perches, the turkeys gabbled, the guinea-fowls uttered their shrill squeaking, and the pigeons flew from their dove-cote, and cooed and strutted upon the gravelled square of the poultry-yard. All this joy and bustle were caused by the arrival of Fleur-de-Marie.

Never did Greuze or Watteau imagine so charming a model as the Goualeuse would have presented, had her cheeks been fuller and more rosy; but, despite of their thinness and want of colour, the expression of her countenance, the elegance of her figure, and the unstudied and perfect grace of her every attitude, were such as would have been well worthy to exercise the pencils of the great painters whom we have named.

The small round cap of Marie displayed her forehead with its bands of fair hair. In common with most of the peasant girls in the neighbourhood of Paris, she wore over this cap, laid flat, and fastened behind with two pins, a large red cotton handkerchief, whose floating ends fell upon her shoulders; a graceful and picturesque head-dress, which might be envied even by the tasteful *coiffures* of Switzerland and Italy. A kerchief of white linen, crossed over her bosom, was half hidden by the high and wide bib of her apron of brown stuff; a boddice of blue cloth, with tight sleeves, displayed her fine shape, and met over her thick winter petticoat of dark-striped dimity; very white stockings and sandalled shoes, half hidden in small black clogs, ornamented at the instep with a square of lamb's-skin, completed this costume of rustic simplicity, to which the natural beauty and grace of Marie lent an inexpressible elegance.

Holding in one hand the ends of her apron, she took thence handfuls of grain, and distributed them among the feathered crowd that surrounded her. One beautiful pigeon, of a silvery whiteness, charmingly contrasted by his purple beak and legs, more loving or more presuming than his companions, after having strutted and billed around her, at length flew to her shoulder, and perched there. The young girl, used, no doubt, to these familiarities, went on distributing her grain with a liberal hand, but half turning her beautiful face, and smiling as she offered her ruby lips to the beak of her caressing favourite. The last rays of the setting sun lighted up this simply beautiful picture with pale gleams of softened gold.

While the Goualeuse was busied with her feathered cares, Madame Georges and the Abbé Laporte, the curé of Bouqueval, seated at the fireside, in the parlour of the farm, were speaking about her—an ever-interesting subject of their conversation. The old curé, pensive, reflecting, his head drooping, and his elbows resting upon his knees, mechanically spread out his trembling hands to catch the genial warmth of the fire. Madame Georges, laying aside the needlework on which she had been employed, looked at the abbé from time to time, in expectation of a reply to some remark she had made. After a few moments' silence, he said: "You are right, Madame Georges; it will be better for M. Rodolph, if he interrogates Marie; she is so grateful, that she will probably avow to her benefactor what she conceals from us."

"Then, since you agree with me, M. the Curé, I will write to him this very evening, at the address which he has given me, in the Allée des Veuves."

"Poor child!" sighed the good curate, "so happy as she ought now to be, what grief can it be that is thus preying upon her?"

"Nothing can wean her from this sadness, M. the Curé; no, not even her earnest application to study."

"And yet, she has made astonishing progress in the short time that she has been under our care."

"Has she not, M. the Curé? To learn to read and write, and to cipher well enough to help me to keep the books of the farm! and then, the dear little girl so actively assists me in everything, that I am astonished and touched. Does she not, in spite of all that I can say, exert herself as even to alarm me for her health?"

"Fortunately, the negro doctor says, that no evil consequences are to be feared from that slight cough which so much alarmed us."

"What a kind man that M. David is! He takes so much interest in her—as every one does who knows her. Here every one respects and cherishes her; though that is not surprising either, for thanks to the elevated and generous views of M. Rodolph, the people employed upon this farm are the most sensible and well-conducted of the labourers of the neighbourhood. But even the grossest and most indifferent natures would feel the influence of that gentleness, at once timid and angelic, which seems perpetually to be asking pardon. Unhappy child! as though she alone were culpable."

After a few minutes passed in silent reflection, the abbé resumed: "Did you not say that the sadness of Marie dated, so to speak, from the stay that Madame Dubrenil—the wife of the farmer to M. the Duke de Lucenay at Arnouville—made here at the Feast of the Toussaints?"

"Yes, M. the Curé, I fancied that I noticed that; and yet, Madame Dubrenil, and her daughter Clara—who is a pattern of candour and kindness—felt the charm of Marie's gentleness and beauty, as every one else does; both of them daily give her proofs of their friendship, and, as you are aware, we either go and see them on Sunday, or they come to us. Well, it would almost seem as if each new visit augments the melancholy of our dear child, although that kind-hearted Clara loves her as if they were own sisters."

"In truth, Madame Georges, it is a strange mystery; what can be the cause of this hidden sadness? She ought to be so very happy now. Between her present and her past life, there is the difference that there is between heaven and the place of the damned. Surely, one cannot justly accuse her of ingratitude?"

"She ungrateful?—she, so touchingly sensible to all, even the slightest attentions bestowed upon her!—she, in whom we have ever found instincts of such a rare delicacy! Does not the poor little girl almost exceed her physical strength in doing all that she can to earn her bread, so to speak? Does she not endeavour to repay by her services the hospitality that is afforded her? Nor is that all; except on a Sunday, when I require her to dress herself with some care and smartness to go to church with me, she chooses to wear clothes as common as those of the peasant girls around her. And, notwithstanding that, she has such a distinction about her, such a natural grace, that even in that garb she is charming, is she not, M. the Curé?"

"Ah," said the good priest, with a benevolent smile, "there I recognise a slight touch of maternal pride!"

At these words, the eyes of poor Madame Georges became suffused with tears: the bereaved mother thought of her long-lost son.

The abbé, guessing the cause of her sudden emotion, said: "Courage, madam! God has sent you this poor child, to aid you in awaiting the moment at which you are to recover your son. And then, a sacred bond will soon attach you to this poor Marie; a godmother, when she rightly understands the sacredness of that relation, is almost the mother of her godchild. As for M. Rodolph, he has given her, so to speak, the life of her soul, in rescuing her from the abyss of crime in which she was plunged, and has thus, by anticipation, discharged his duties as a godfather."

"Do you find her sufficiently instructed, M. the Curé, to administer to her that sacrament which, doubtless, the unfortunate girl has not yet received?"

"Just now, as she returned hither with me from the rectory-house, I told her that the ceremony would be performed, very probably, in a fortnight."

"Oh, I am sure she received the information with gratitude, for her heart is deeply embued with religious feeling."

"Alas!" said the curate, "she has grave offences to expiate."

Nay, M. the Curé, but consider how she has been situated. Abandoned so young, without support, without resources, almost without notions of good and evil, thrown, in spite of herself, into the paths of vice, how was it possible for her to avert the sacrifice she has made?"

"Moral sense of right and wrong should have both enlightened and sustained her, and, moreover, aided the endeavour to escape from that horrible doom. Are charitable souls so rare, so utterly extinct in Paris?"

"No, doubtless they are not, M. the Curé, but where are they to be sought? Before such could be discovered, how many refusals must be borne, how much indifference must be witnessed! And then, for Marie, what was required was not a mere passing alms, but a continued interest, which would have put her in the way of earning an honest livelihood. Many mothers there are who would have pity upon her, I doubt not; but then she must first have had the happiness to become known to them. Ah! believe me, I have known and felt what it is to be in the extremity of poverty. But for one of those blessed chances which, alas! too late, threw poor Marie in the way of M. Rodolph; except, I say, for one of those providential casualties, the unfortunate, almost always brutally repulsed at their first solicitation, learn to believe that pity is not to be met with; and, urged by hunger, fierce, clamorous hunger, they often seek in vice that relief they despair to obtain from commiseration."

At this moment, La Goualeuse entered the parlour.

"Where have you been, my child?" asked Madame Georges, with interest.

"I have been visiting the fruit-store, madam, after I had fed the poultry, and shut them up for the night. The fruits have kept excellently, except a very few, which I have eaten."

"Why not have left that task to Claudine, my dear Marie? I fear you have quite fatigued yourself again."

Oh, no, madam, I am so pleased with my fruit-store! The smell of the beautiful ripe fruit is so delicious!"

"You must, some day, pay a visit to Marie's fruit-store, M. the Curé," said Madame Georges. "You cannot conceive with what taste she has arranged it; garlands of grapes separate each species of fruit from the others, and these, again, are divided into compartments by borders of moss."

"Oh, M. the Curé, I am quite sure the sight would please you," said La Goualeuse, innocently. "You will see what a beautiful effect the moss has around the rosy apples and the golden pears. There is one kind of apple, especially, of delicate red and white, which look like little heads of cherubim in nests of green moss," added the delighted girl, with the ardour of one speaking of the work of her own creation.

The curate smiled, as he exchanged a glance with Madame Georges, and said to Fleur-de-Marie: "I have already admired the dairy that you zealously direct, and it would, undoubtedly, satisfy the most skilful and industrious of housewifes; one of these days, I will also go and admire your fruit-store, with its beautiful rosy apples and golden pears; but, especially, I will be prepared to admire those pretty cherub apples, peeping from their mossy nests. But see, the sun is fast setting; you will barely have time to conduct me back to the parsonage, and return before dark. Put on your cloak, my child, and let us begone: and yet, now I think of it, the cold is very severe; you had better stay at home, and let some one of the farm-people accompany me."

"Ah! M. the Curé, you will make poor Marie very unhappy, if you insist upon that," said Madame Georges; "she is so delighted to escort you to your home every evening."

"M. the Curé," added La Goualeuse, turning her large, blue, timid eyes, almost tearful, upon the countenance of the venerable priest, "I shall fear you are displeased with me, if you will not allow me to accompany you as usual."

"I displeased with you, my poor child? No, no; rather than allow that idea to distress you, I will consent to your going; so, wrap yourself very warm, and let us go."

Fleur-de-Marie hastily threw over her shoulders a sort of hooded pelisse of coarse grey cloth, edged with velvet, and offered her arm to the curate.

"Fortunately," said he, "the distance is short, and the road is a good and safe one."

"As it is somewhat later this evening than you are usually out, Marie," said Madame

Georges, "will you have one of the farm-labourers to accompany you?"

"Oh," said Marie, with a smile, "what a little coward they would think me! I thank you, madam, but pray do not think of troubling any one on my account; it is not a quarter of an hour's walk to the parsonage: I shall be back before dark."

"Well, well," said Madame Georges, "I will not insist upon it; for, thank heaven, we never hear of any vagrants in this neighbourhood."

"No; unless that were the case," said the curé, "I would not accept the aid of this dear child, great as it is to me."

And, leaning on the arm of Fleur-de-Marie, who accommodated her light and agile step to the slow and laboured pace of the old man, the two quitted the farm. A few minutes' walk brought La Goualeuse and the priest to the hollow road where the Schoolmaster, La Chouette, and Tortillard were lying in ambush.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE AMBUSCADE.

The church and parsonage of Bouqueval stood on the side of a hill covered with chesnut-trees, and commanded a full view of the village. Fleur-de-Marie and the Abbé gained a winding path, which led to the house, and crossed the ravine road, by which the hill was diagonally intersected. La Chouette, the Schoolmaster, and Tortillard, crouching in one of the deep hollows of this road, saw the priest and Marie descending the ravine, and leave it again by a steep ascent. The features of the young girl, however, were completely concealed by her hood, and La Chouette did not recognise her former victim.

"Silence, my man!" said the one-eyed hag to the Schoolmaster; "the young *mot* and the *deril-dodger* have just crossed the path; it certainly is the same girl, according to the description given by the tall man in mourning. Country-looking, middle stature, striped brown petticoat, and light woollen cloak, with a black border. She every evening sees the old fellow home to his *crib*, in this way, and then returns alone. When she, presently, comes back, we must fall upon her yonder, at the end of the road, and carry her off to the coach."

"And if she calls out for assistance," said the Schoolmaster, "she would be heard at the farm, if, as you say, you can see the out-buildings from here—for you *can* see, you two can," added he, in a sullen voice.

"Oh, it is true enough, that we can see the buildings from here," said Tortillard. "A few minutes ago, I crawled up upon all-fours, to the top of the slope, and I could hear a carter talking to his horse, in the yard down yonder."

"Then, I'll tell you what must be done," said the Schoolmaster, after a moment's silence: "Tortillard must place himself on the watch, at the entrance to the path she has followed; and when he sees the girl returning, in the distance, he must run up to her, exclaiming, that he is the son of a poor old woman, who has hurt herself, by falling into the ravine; and then he must beg the young girl to come and help the poor unfortunate."

"I see, *fourline;* the poor old woman is your darling Chouette. You're wide awake still. My man, you are always the very prince of *downy coves*. And when she comes, what must I do?"

"Keep yourself concealed in the ravine, on the side where Barbillon awaits us with the coach, and I will hide myself pretty close to you. When Tortillard shall have *gammoned* the young wench within your reach in the ravine, leave off the groans, and spring right upon her; put one *mauley* upon her *squeeze*, and the other in her *patter-box*, and *grab* her *red rag*, to prevent her from singing out."

"Right, *fourline;* the same as we did with the woman of the canal Saint-Martin, when we made her float after having *prigged* her *negress* (parcel wrapped in black oil-skin), that she carried under her arm. The same *dodge*, is it not to be?"

"Yes, exactly the same. While you keep fast hold of the girl, Tortillard will run to my hiding-place to lead me to you; then the three of us will bundle her up in my cloak, and carry her to the coach of Barbillon, who will drive us to the plain of St. Denis, where the tall man in black will await us."

"That's the way to do business, my *fourline;* you have not an equal! If I had the requisites, I would let off a firework on your head, and illuminate you with the colours of Saint Charlot, the patron of *cracksmen*. And, you little monkey, do you hear? if you would be an *out-and-outer*, keep a bright look-out upon my man—my long-headed cove there—he's a model for you, if you like," said the Chouette, boastingly, to Tortillard. Then, addressing the Schoolmaster: "By the way, do you know that Barbillon is in a mad-dog *funk?* He thinks that he shall have a *brain fever* (be tried for his life, and executed.)

"Why?"

"The other day, returning from Mother Martial's, the widow of the man who was *scragged*, and who keeps the *boozing-ken* in the Ile du Ravageur, Barbillon, the Gros-Boiteux, and the Skeleton, had a row with the husband of the milkwoman who comes every morning from the country in a little cart drawn by a donkey, to sell her milk in the City, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, close to the ogress's of the 'White Rabbit,' and they *walked into him with their knives*."

The son of Bras Rouge, who did not understand slang, listened to the Chouette with a sort of disappointed curiosity.

"You would like to know what we were saying just now, wouldn't you, my little hoppy?"

Yes, that I should. You were talking of Mother Martial, who is at the Ile du Ravageur, near Asniéres. I know her well, and her daughter Calebasse, and François and Amandine, who are about my age, and who are made to bear everybody's kicks and thumps in the house. But when you talked of *walking into* any one, that's slang, I am certain."

"To be sure it is; and if you're a good lad, I'll teach you to *patter flash*. You're just the age when it may be useful to you. Would you like to learn, my boy?"

"Oh! I believe you; and I would rather stop with you than with my old thief of a quack doctor, pounding his drugs. If I knew where he hides his *rat-poison for men*, I'd put some in his soup, and that would make us even chalks."

"The Chouette laughed heartily, and said to Tortillard, drawing him towards her: "Come, ducky, and kiss his mammy. What a dear, droll boy it is! But how didst know that your master had rat-poison for men?"

"Why, 'cause I heard him say so one day,

when I was hid in the dark closet in the room where he keeps his bottles, his brass machines, and his little pots."

"What did you hear him say, darling?" asked the Chouette.

"I heard him say to a gentleman, as he gave him a powder done up in a paper: 'When you are tired of your life, take this in three doses, and you will sleep without sickness or sorrow.'"

"Who was the gentleman?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, a handsome gentleman with black moustaches, and a pretty face like a young lady's. He came another time; and then, when he left, I followed him, by M. Bradamanti's order, to find out where he *perched*. The pretty-faced gentleman went into a very fine house in the Rue de Chaillot. My master had said to me: 'No matter where this gentleman goes, follow and wait for him at the door. If he come out again, still keep your eye on him, until he does not come from out of the place where he enters, and that will prove that he lives there. Then Tortillard, my boy, twist yourself about to find out his name, or I will twist your ears in a way that will make you remember me for some time to come.'"

"Well?"

"Well, I did *twist* myself about, and found out my pretty-faced gentleman's name."

"How did you manage it?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Why, see you, I'm not such a fool, after all; I went to the porter at the fine house in the Rue de Chaillot, where this gentleman had gone in and not come out again. The porter had his hair finely powdered, with a nobby brown coat with a yellow collar trimmed with silver. So I says to him: 'My good gentleman, I have come to ask for a hundred sous which the gentleman of the house promised me for having found his dog, and which I gave back to him—a little black dog, called *Trumpet;* and the gentleman with dark features, with black moustaches, a white riding-coat, and light blue pantaloons, told me he lived at No. 11, Rue de Chaillot, and that his name was Dupont. 'The gentleman you're talking of is my master, and his name is the Viscount de Saint-Remy; we have no dog here but yourself, you villanous young scamp; so *cut your stick*, or I'll make you remember coming here, to try to gammon me out of a hundred sous,' says the porter, giving me a thundering kick as he said it. But that was nothing," added Tortillard, most philosophically; "for I found out the name of the handsome young gentleman with black moustaches, who came to my master's to buy the *rat-poison for men* who are tired of their lives. He is called the Viscount de Saint-Remy—my—my—Saint-Remy," added the son of Bras Rouge, humming the last words, as was his custom.

"Ah! I could eat you alive, you dear little fellow!" said the Chouette, embracing Tortillard. "Never was such a clever child! He deserves to have me for his mother, bless him!"

And the one-eyed hag embraced Tortillard with a grotesque affectation. The son of Bras Rouge, profoundly touched by this proof of affection, and all anxiety to shew his gratitude, eagerly answered: "You only tell me what to do, and you shall see how I'll do it."

"Will you, pretty boy? Well then, you shan't repent of it."

"Oh, I should like always to be with you!"

"If you behave well, we shall see about that. You shall stay with us, my lad."

"Yes," said the Schoolmaster, "you shall lead me about like a poor blind man, and say you are my son. We will introduce ourselves into houses in this way, and then—ten thousand massacres!" added the assassin, with enthusiasm, "the Chouette will assist us in making some lucky hits. I will then teach that devil of a Rodolph, who had me blinded, that I am not yet at the end of my letter. He has taken away my eyesight but he has not deprived me of the power to plan mischief. I will be the head, Tortillard the eyes, and you the hand, my Chouette! You will help me in this, eh?"

"Am I not yours to the rope and to the gallows?" replied La Chouette. "When I came out of the hospital, and heard that you had sent the *yokel* from St. Mandé to inquire for me at the ogress's, did I not instantly hasten off to you at the village, among those louts of peasants, telling them that I was your wife?"

These words of the one-eyed old hag brought a very bitter and evil reminiscence to the mind of the Schoolmaster. Suddenly changing his tone and language towards La Chouette, he said in a fierce voice: "Yes, I grew tired of being all alone among honest people; at the end of a month I could stand it no longer, I was frightened, and then I thought of sending for you to come to me—and a nice thing I have made of it!" he continued, in a tone of increasing bitterness; "for on the morning after your arrival, I was robbed of the whole remainder of the money which that demon of the Allée des Veuves had given me. Yes, my belt, lined with gold, was taken from me during my sleep. None but you could have done the trick so nicely, and thus it is that I am now at your mercy. Whenever I think of that, I do not know why it is that I do not kill you upon the spot—you old thief!" And, as he spoke, he made a hasty and angry stride towards La Chouette.

"Look out for yourself, if you hurt La Chouette, that's all!" cried Tortillard.

"I'll smash you both, you and her together, infernal vipers that you are!" cried the enraged ruffian. And hearing the son of Bras Rouge speaking close to him, he aimed at him a blow of such terrible force, that, had it reached the boy, it undoubtedly would have killed him. Tortillard, as much to avenge himself as La Chouette, caught up a stone, took a deliberate aim at the Schoolmaster, and hit him full in the forehead. The blow was not dangerous, but very painful for the instant. The brigand now became furious and terrible as a wounded bull; he rushed forward several paces at random, but stumbled and fell.

"Well done, old break-neck!" cried La Chouette, laughing until she cried.

Notwithstanding the sanguinary bonds which attached her to this monster, she, for many reasons, looked with a sort of ferocious joy upon the degradation and helplessness of this man, lately so terrible, and so vain of his giant strength. The one-eyed wretch thus, after her fashion, justified the frightful maxim of La Rochefoucauld, that "in the misfortunes of our best friends, we always find something that gratifies us." The hideous boy, with his lank yellow hair and weasel features, shared the horrible merriment of La Chouette. The Schoolmaster tripped again, and the vile little urchin exclaimed: "Open your eyes, old fellow; why don't you open your eyes?

You tumble about all manner of ways, and cut such rum capers; can't you see clear? Wipe your eye-glasses clean!"

Feeling the impossibility of catching the boy, the herculean murderer stopped, stamped his feet in fury, laid his vast and shaggy hands upon his eyes, and uttered a howl, hoarse and horrible as that of a muzzled tiger.

"What, have you got a cough, old chap?" said the offspring of Bras-Rouge; "here is some famous liquorice—*look at it!* It was given to me by a gendarme; but don't let that put you out of conceit of it! Will you try it?" And, taking up a handful of sand and gravel, he threw it full in the face of the ruffian.

Sharply cut in the face by this shower of gravel, the Schoolmaster suffered even more from this new insult; turning visibly pale, even beneath his livid and hideous scars, he suddenly crossed and extended his arms, and turning towards heaven his frightful face, he exclaimed in a voice of deep suffering: "My God! my God! my God!"

From a man, sullied with all descriptions of crimes, and before whom the most determined villains so lately trembled, this involuntary appeal to the divine commiseration appeared like a providential interposition.

"Ah! ha!" said La Chouette, chuckling, "my *fourline*, my cut-throat making the crucifix! Your tongue is turned the wrong way, my man. It is the devil that you should call to your aid."

"Oh! let me have a knife, that I may kill myself out of the way, since all the world abandons me! A knife! a knife!" cried the despairing wretch; and he gnawed his fists with savage fury.

"A knife! You have one in your pocket, my cut-throat, and a sharp one too. The little old man in the Rue du Roule, you know, one moonlight night, and the cattle-dealer on the Poissy-road, could tell the worms all about it by this time. But if you are anxious for it, it is here."

The Schoolmaster thus urged to do execution on himself with the blade which he had so abundantly proved upon his victims, changed the conversation, and said in a surly and dastardly tone: "The Chourineur had a good heart; he took pity upon me, and did not rob me!"

"And what made you say that I had *prigged* your *blunt?*" returned La Chouette, scarcely able to refrain from laughter.

"Because you alone entered my room," said the brigand; "and I was robbed on the night of your arrival; whom then would you have me to suspect? Those poor country-people were incapable of doing such a thing."

"Why should not these country-people thieve as well as other folks? Because they drink milk, and gather grass for their rabbits?"

"However, I have been robbed, that I know!"

"And is that the fault of the Chouette? Do you think, if I had got your belt, I should have been fool enough to remain with you, after I had done the trick? How stupid you must be, even to dream of such a thing! You may safely take your oath that I would have cleared you out of your *shiners*, if I could; but, on the faith of the Chouette, you would have seen me again, when I had got rid of it; for, see you, I quite like you, with your white eyes, you beauty! Come, come, behave yourself, and don't break your teeth by grinding them in that way, all to no purpose."

"One would say that he is cracking nuts!" said Tortillard.

"Ha! ha! ha! you are quite right, my pretty dear! Come, calm yourself, my man, and leave off laughing—it does not become your years! But confess, now, that you are unjust towards me. When the tall man in mourning, who always puts me in mind of a churchyard crow, said to me: 'There are a thousand francs for you, if you will carry off a young girl, who is at the farm of Bouqueval, and bring her to a spot in the plain of St. Denis, which I shall point out to you,' answer me, cut-throat, did I not directly propose to you to be in the job, instead of choosing some one who could see clear? Why, it's like making you a handsome present for doing nothing; for, unless you hold the wench still while Tortillard and I gag her and pack her up, you will be about as useful to me as the fifth wheel would be to an omnibus; but it don't matter now, though I confess I would have robbed you if I could, for I love to do you a service! I should wish you to be indebted for everything to your loved Chouette—it's a way I've got? We shall give two hundred francs to Barbillon for driving us down in the coach, and for having come here once with a servant of the tall man in mourning, to reconnoitre the place where we shall have to hide, in order to catch the little wench; and so we shall have left, for you and me to enjoy ourselves, like a virtuous couple as we are, eight hundred francs. What do you say to that, old boy? Well, are you still cross with your old woman?"

"How am I to know that you will give me anything, after all, when the job is done?" asked the brigand, in a tone of surly distrust.

"Why, it is quite true that I very easily might get off giving you anything at all; for I have you on my gridiron, my man, as I formerly had La Goualeuse; and so you may just let yourself be grilled to my liking, until Old Nick, in his turn, shall shove you into his oven! Ha! ha! ha! Do you still sulk with your Chouette?" added the horrible woman, slapping the shoulder of the brigand, who was standing silent, and, seemingly, overwhelmed with despair.

"You are right," said he, with a sob of concentrated rage; "oh, yes, you are very right, indeed—it is my fate! I—I to be at the mercy of a woman and a child, whom a short time ago I could have killed with a mere breath. Oh! if I were not so afraid of death!" said he, falling back upon the bank.

"What a cur you are! What a downright coward!" said La Chouette, contemptuously. "Pray finish the farce by talking about your conscience; you may as well do that at once! Well, if you have no more pluck than that, I shall wrangle and leave you!"

"And then, not even to be able to avenge myself upon that man who, in thus martyrising me, has placed me in this horrible position, and from which I can never escape!" cried the Schoolmaster, with redoubled fury. "Oh, yes! I have a vast horror of death; but if any one would say to me: 'You shall have that man placed in your arms, between your two still nervous arms, and then you shall both be thrown into a pit,' I would reply: 'Throw us then at once.' Yes, for I should be sure not to loosen my hold, ere he and I both reached the bottom! Oh! I would fix my teeth in his face—his throat—his very heart! I would tear him to pieces like a wolf—yes, with my teeth, my teeth!—for I should be jealous of a knife!"

"Very good, *fourline;* now I like you again.

But be calm, be calm; we shall meet with him again, yet, that beggar Rodolph, and the Chourineur too Courage, my man! we will yet have our will with these two—yes, I say, we will yet give them a turn."

"And you will not abandon me, will you?" said the brigand, in a tone submissive and suspicious; "if you now abandon me, what would become of me?"

"There, that's very true! I say, *fourline*, what a farce it would be if Tortillard and I should bolt with the coach, and leave you here in the midst of the fields, and the night so cold too. I say, that would be a rummy go, wouldn't it, old cutpurse?"

At this indirect threat, the Schoolmaster shuddered; he drew near to La Chouette, and said to her in a tremulous voice: "No, no, you will not do that, Chouette—nor you, Tortillard; that would be too cruel!"

"Ha! ha!" cried the hag, "how simple and innocent he is! And the little old man of the Rue du Roule, and the grazier, and the woman of the canal Saint-Martin, and that gentleman in the Allée des Veuves, they must all have thought you very gentle and caressing, with your long sharp knife, no doubt!—and why should not you be played tricks with in your turn?"

"I am in your power—don't abuse it," said the Schoolmaster. "Come, come, I see I was wrong to suspect you, I was also wrong in wishing to beat Tortillard; I beg your pardon, La Chouette, do you hear? and yours, also, Tortillard—yes, I beg pardon of you both!"

"I, for my part, will have you kneel down and beg pardon for having tried to beat La Chouette," said Tortillard.

"Beggar of a dear little fellow, how amusing he is!" said La Chouette, laughing; "but I should rather like to see what sort of a figure you would cut, playing that game! Come, down on your knees, as if you were *pattering* love to your Chouette; make haste, or we shall be angry and leave you, and I can tell you that in half an hour it will be dark night—though you don't look as if you thought so, old 'No-eyes!'"

"Night or day, what is the difference to him?" said Tortillard, saucily; "the gentleman always keeps his shutters closed!"

"On my knees then, I ask pardon of you, La Chouette, and of you too, Tortillard. There, will that content you?" said the brigand, kneeling in the middle of the highway. And now, say that you will not abandon me!"

This strange group, enclosed by the dark and frowning ravine, and partially lighted up by the red gleams of the fast-fading twilight was hideous to behold. In the middle of the road, the Schoolmaster, on his knees, extended his arms in supplication to the one-eyed hag; his thick, matted hair fell like a mane upon his livid brow and face, leaving exposed his motionless, rigid, glassy, dead eyeballs—the very look of a corpse! Yes, his formidable shoulders were bowed in supplication—this Hercules knelt abjectly at the feet of an old woman and a child!

The one-eyed hag, wrapped up in a red tartan shawl, and having upon her head an old cap of black lace, from which escaped some lank locks of grey hair, stood over the Schoolmaster with an air of haughty contempt. The bony, tanned, shrivelled, and livid countenance of the parrot-nosed old woman expressed a savage and insulting joy; her wild eye gleamed like a burning coal, and a sinister expression parted her hairy lips, and revealed three or four large, yellow teeth.

Tortillard, dressed in a blouse, with a broad leather belt, stood upon one leg, maintaining his equilibrium by leaning upon the arm of La Chouette. The bad expression and cunning look of this child, of a complexion as sallow as his hair, betokened at this moment a triumph malignant and diabolical. The shadow thrown out by the declivity of the ravine, added to the horror of this scene, half veiled by the fast increasing darkness.

"Promise me, oh! at least promise me, that you will not abandon me," repeated the Schoolmaster, whose alarm was increased by the silence of La Chouette and Tortillard, who were enjoying his perplexity. "Are you not here?" added the murderer, leaning forward to listen, extending his arms as if in search of them.

"Yes, yes, my man, we are here—don't be afraid of that. Abandon you! I'd rather be *scragged* at once! I must satisfy you, once for all, upon that point, so I'll tell you why I will never abandon you. Listen to me, and profit. I have always dearly loved to have some one or some thing in my clutches—man, woman, or beast, no matter. Before I had Pegriotte (oh! the devil send her back to me, for I have still my idea of peeling off her beauty with my vitriol) —before Pegriotte, I had a brat who became a *stiff 'un*, through my nursing; it was for that one that I was locked up for six years; and during that time I amused myself, as well as I could, with torturing birds. I plucked them alive, but I could not get my pennyworth out of them, the little wretches so soon died. When I came out of prison, Goualeuse fell into my hands, but the little beggar cut her lucky while her carcase would still have yielded me some sport. After that, I had a little dog, and he too gave good sport; I cut off one paw before, and one behind, and it was so droll to see how the little devil did limp along! I used to laugh till I cried."

"I must come that dodge with a dog that I know, that bit me once," said Tortillard.

"When I met with you, my man," continued La Chouette, "I was engaged upon rendering a cat miserable. Well, now, old boy, you will be my cat, my dog, my bird, my Pegriotte—in a word, you will be my beast of suffering. Do you understand, my man? Instead of a bird or a child to torment, I shall have one we may call a wolf or a tiger. That's rather good, isn't it, old fellow—something original, eh?"

"Old fury!" cried the Schoolmaster, rising from the ground in a horrible rage.

"Ah! what you still scold your darling old woman! Well, go then, you are your own master!—Good night—blind beggar!"

"The gate of the field is open, so be off, old 'No-eyes,' by yourself; if you follow your nose, you'll find yourself somewhere," said Tortillard, laughing heartily.

"Oh! death, death!! Could I but die!" said the Schoolmaster, wringing and twisting his arms in agony.

At this moment, Tortillard, stooping to the ground, and listening attentively, said: "I hear somebody walking in the path. Let us hide. It is not the young girl, for the footsteps come the same way as she did."

The next minute, a sturdy peasant-woman, in the prime of life, followed by a large sheep-dog, and carrying on her head an open basket, appeared, crossed the ravine, and took the same

path which the priest and the Goualeuse had taken. We will now rejoin the latter, and, for the present, leave the three accomplices in the place of their concealment.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RECTORY-HOUSE.

The last gleams of the sun had gradually disappeared behind the imposing mass of the Chateau of Ecouen and the woods by which it is surrounded. On all sides, far beyond the reach of sight, extended immense plains, with their brown furrows, hardened by the frost—a vast solitude, amidst which the hamlet of Bouqueval appeared like an oasis. The sky, gloriously serene, was tinted with the hues of sunset, and glowed with long, empurpled streaks of light—an infallible token of cold and wind. These tints, at first of a deep red, were mellowed to a violet, becoming of a bluish black as the twilight thickened on the atmosphere. The crescent of the moon, clearly and delicately defined, like the half of a silver ring, began to shed a soft light in a centre of dark azure. The silence was absolute, the hour was solemn. The curé stopped for an instant on the hill, to enjoy the aspect of this lovely evening. After a few minutes of silent contemplation, he extended his trembling hand towards the depths of the horizon, half veiled by the evening mists, and said to Fleur-de-Marie, who walked pensively beside him: "Look, my child, upon that immense space, to which we can no longer fix any imaginary limit. We hear not the slightest sound. It would seem that silence and infinity almost give us an idea of eternity! I say this to you, Marie, because you are so sensibly alive to the beauties of the creation. I have often been touched at the religious admiration with which they have inspired you—you who were so long disinherited of them. Are not you, as I am, struck with the solemn tranquillity which reigns around us?"

La Goualeuse made no reply. Astonished at this, the good man looked at her—she was in tears.

"What ails you, my child?"

"My father, I am very unhappy."

"Unhappy?—you, unhappy still?"

"I know that I ought not to complain of my lot, after all that has been done for me, and yet ——"

"And yet?"

"Ah! my father, forgive me this grief; perhaps it will offend my benefactors."

"Hear me, Marie. We have often asked the cause of the sadness which sometimes oppresses you, and which has caused your second mother much uneasiness. You have avoided replying to us, and we have respected your secret, whilst we have suffered from our inability to soothe you."

"Alas! my father, I cannot describe to you what is passing in my mind. I have been moved, as you are, by the aspect of this calm scene. My heart was full, and I wept."

"But what ails you then, Marie? You know how you are beloved; come, tell me all. Moreover, I have something to tell you. The day is not far distant when M. Rodolph and Madame Georges will present you at the baptismal fount, and engage themselves before God for your instruction and protection during life."

"M. Rodolph—he who has saved me?" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands; "will he deign to give me this new proof of affection? Oh! my father, I must indeed no longer hide anything from you, lest I should be deemed ungrateful, which would afflict me still more."

"Ungrateful! and how?"

"That you may understand me, father, I must speak to you of my first days at the farm."

"I will listen to you as we walk along."

"You will be indulgent, will you not, father? What I have to say to you may perhaps be very wrong."

"The Lord has proved to you that he is very merciful. Be of good courage."

"When, on arriving at the farm, I was told that I might, if I pleased, remain there with Madame Georges," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, "it seemed to me that I was only in a beautiful dream. At first I was completely bewildered with excess of happiness. I thought of M. Rodolph at every instant. Very often, when I was alone, in spite of myself, I lifted my eyes towards heaven, as if to seek him there, and thank him. In truth—and I accuse myself for so doing, my father—I thought more of him than of God; for he had been as God in his treatment of me. I was happy—happy as one who has for ever escaped from some great and terrible danger. You and Madame Georges were so kind to me, that I then deemed my past conduct to be rather pitiable than blameable."

The curé looked at La Goualeuse with surprise. She continued: "By degrees, I accustomed myself to this life, so peaceful and retired; I no longer was alarmed lest, when I woke, that I should find myself again with the ogress—I felt, so to speak, security in my sleep. All my delight was to assist Madame Georges in her labours, and apply myself to the lessons which you, my father, gave to me, as well as to profit by your exhortations. Excepting some moments of shame, when I reflected on the past, I fancied myself the equal of every one, because every one was kind to me, till one day ——"

Here the poor girl's utterance became choked by her sobs.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my dear child; take courage, and continue."

The Goualeuse, drying her eyes, resumed: "You remember, father, when, at the fêtes of the Toussaints, Madame Dubrenil, wife of the farmer to the Duke de Lucenay, at Arnouville, passed some time here with her daughter?"

"I do; and I was glad to see you become acquainted with Clara Dubrenil: she possesses the best qualities."

"She is an angel, father—an angel of goodness. When I learned that she was to stay for several days at the farm, I was delighted; I counted the moments that were to elapse before the arrival of that desired companion. At length she came. I was in my room, which she was to share with me, busying myself in setting it off to the best advantage, for her reception. I was sent for. My heart beat violently when I entered the saloon, and Madame Georges, presenting me to the pretty young lady, who looked so gentle, modest, and kind, said: 'Marie, here is a friend for you.' 'And I hope,' added Madame Dubrenil, 'that you and my daughter will soon be like two sisters.' Scarcely had her mother said those words, ere Mademoiselle Clara ran to me and embraced me. Then, my father," continued Fleur-de-Marie, in tears, "I know not what suddenly passed within me; but when I felt the pure, fresh countenance of Clara pressed upon

my polluted cheek, that cheek became burning with shame—remorse; I remembered who and what I was. I—I to receive the caresses of a virtuous girl! ——"

"Nay; but, my child ——"

"Ah, my father!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, interrupting the curé with painful emotion, "when M. Rodolph took me from the City, I began to be somewhat conscious of my degradation. But can you doubt that education, advice, the examples I receive from Madame Georges and yourself, have not, whilst they have enlightened my mind, made me, alas! to comprehend that I have in truth been more culpable than unfortunate? Before the arrival of Mademoiselle Clara, whenever these thoughts distressed me, I endeavoured to dispel them by increased exertions to please Madame Georges and you, my father. If I had blushed for the past, before the arrival of that innocent girl, I had blushed only in my own privacy; but the sight of that young person, of my own age, so charming, so virtuous, convinced me of the distance which separated me from her for ever. For the first time, I felt that there are stains which can never be effaced, and from that day forth, this thought has never left me; in spite of myself, I incessantly dwell upon it—in a word, I have not since had one moment of repose."

Marie wept bitterly as she uttered these last words. After regarding her for a few moments, with an expression of the most tender commiseration, the curé said: "But consider, my child, that if Madame Georges wished you to be the friend of Clara Dubrenil, it was because she deemed that your conduct rendered you worthy of such a connexion. Your self-reproaches, therefore, almost address themselves to your excellent second mother."

"I know it, father, and doubtless I was wrong; but I could not subdue my feelings of shame and dread. This is not all; I must summon all my courage to tell you the rest."

"Proceed, Marie; thus far your remorse, or rather your scruples, have but testified to your goodness of heart."

"When Clara became settled at the farm, I was as melancholy as I had hitherto been happy in thinking of the pleasure of having a companion of my own age; she, on the contrary, was joyous as could be. A bed was made up for her in my room. On the first night, before she retired to rest, she embraced me and told me that she loved me already, and felt every kind sentiment towards me. She asked me to call her Clara, and she would call me Marie. Then she said her prayers, telling me that she would join my name with hers in her supplications, if I would also unite her name with mine. I dared not refuse that. After having chatted some time longer, she at length fell asleep. I had not yet even got into bed, and, approaching her, I wept as I looked at her angelic countenance; and then, as I reflected that this innocent creature was thus unconsciously sleeping in the same room with me—with me, who had so lately been brought from among thieves and assassins, I trembled as if I had just committed some great crime. I had vague and terrible fears; it seemed to me that God would some day punish me. At length I went to bed, and had frightful dreams, in which I again saw the sinister features, that I had nearly forgotten till then, of the Schoolmaster, the Chourineur, and La Chouette, the one-eyed woman who so tortured my childhood. Oh! what a night, what a night!—and what dreams!" And La Goualeuse actually shuddered at the mere remembrance.

"Poor Marie!" said the curé, with great emotion, "why did you not sooner reveal to me these sad confidences? I should have comforted you. But proceed."

"I had closed my eyes so late, that I was still sleeping when I was roused by the caresses of Mademoiselle Dubrenil. To overcome what she called my coolness, and to give me a proof of her sincere friendship, she wished to confide a secret to me—she was to be married, she said, as soon as she should complete her eighteenth year, to the son of a farmer at Goussainville, to whom she was tenderly attached. The marriage had for a long time been agreed upon between the two families; and then, in a few words, she related to me the whole history of her life—a life so simple, calm, and happy. She had never yet quitted her mother, and she would never have to leave her, for her husband was to take part in the management of the farm with M. Dubrenil. 'Now, Marie,' she said, 'you know me as well as if you were my sister; so tell me all about your early days.'"

"I thought I should have died when I heard these words. I blushed and stammered; I did not know what Madame Georges had said of me, and I was fearful of telling a falsehood. I answered vaguely, that I had been an orphan, very strictly educated; that I had not been happy in my infancy, and that my happiness was dated from the moment that I came to live with Madame Georges. Then Clara, as much by interest as curiosity, asked me where I had been educated, in the city or the country, my father's name, and, above all, if I had any recollection of my mother. All these questions embarrassed as much as they pained me, for I was obliged to reply with falsehood, and you have taught me, father, how wicked it is to utter an untruth; but Clara did not think that I was deceiving her; she attributed the hesitation of my answers to the pain which my early sorrows renewed; she believed me, and pitied me with a sincerity that cut me to the soul. Oh, father, you never can know what I suffered in this conversation, and how much it cost me only to reply in language of falsehood and hypocrisy!"

"Unfortunate girl! the anger of Heaven will weigh heavily on those who, by casting you into the road of perdition, have compelled you to bear all your life the sad consequences of a first fault."

"Oh, yes, they were indeed cruel, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, bitterly, "for my shame is ineffaceable. As Clara talked to me of the happiness that awaited her—her marriage, her peaceful joys of home, I could not help comparing my lot with hers; for, in spite of the kindness bestowed upon me, my fate must always be miserable. You and Madame Georges, in teaching me what virtue is, have taught me the depth of that abasement into which I had fallen; nothing can take from me the stain of having been linked with all that is vilest in the world. Alas! if the knowledge of good and evil was to render me so sad, why not have left me to my unhappy fate?"

"Oh, Marie, Marie!"

"Father, I speak ill, do I not? Alas! I dare not confess it; but I am at times so ungrateful as to repine at the benefits heaped upon me, and to say to myself: 'If I had not been snatched from infamy, why wretchedness, misery, blows,

would have terminated my life, and at the least I should have died in ignorance of a purity which I must for ever regret.' "

"Alas, Marie, that indeed is fatal! A nature ever so generously endowed by the Creator, even be it plunged for but a day in the mire from which you have been rescued, must ever retain an ineffaceable stain."

"You clearly see then, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, in tones of the most agonising grief, "that I must despair, even until death!"

"You must despair of effacing that desolating page from your life," said the priest, in a sad and serious voice; "but you should hope in the infinite mercy of the Almighty. Here on earth, tears, remorse, and expiation, are for you, my poor child; but some day, *on high*"—and the good old man pointed to the now starry firmament—"*on high*, you shall have pardon and eternal felicity!"

"Pity! pity, my God! I am so young, and my life may yet be so long!" said La Goualeuse, in a thrilling tone, as she involuntarily fell upon her knees before the good curé.

The priest was standing on the brow of the hill, not far from the parsonage. His black cassock, his venerable countenance, surrounded by his long white hair, and softly illumined by the twilight, were reflected by the deeply transparent horizon. The priest lifted up one of his trembling hands to heaven, and abandoned the other to Fleur-de-Marie, who bedewed it with tears. The hood of her cloak, falling at this moment upon her shoulders, disclosed the beautiful profile of the young girl—her charming features full of suffering, and suffused with tears.

This simple and sublime scene offered a contrast—a strange coincidence with the horrible one which almost at the same moment was passing in the depths of the hollow, between the

Schoolmaster and La Chouette. Concealed in the shadows of the dark ravine, a prey to the most dastardly and harrowing terrors, a frightful murderer, suffering the punishment due to his numberless crimes, was also kneeling, but before his accomplice—a railing and avenging fury, who tormented him without mercy, and urged him to new crimes—his accomplice, the first cause of the misery of Fleur-de-Marie; of Fleur-de-Marie, who was incessantly tortured by never-dying remorse; whose anguish was so great as to be hardly conceivable. Surrounded from her very infancy by degraded, evil, and infamous beings; quitting a prison for the vile den of the ogress—a prison still more horrible; constantly kept in the precincts of the gaol, or in the cavernous streets of the city, this unfortunate young girl had hitherto lived in profound ignorance of the beautiful and the good, as much a stranger to noble and religious sentiments as to the magnificent splendours of nature. All that is admirable alike in the creature and in the creation, was thus at once revealed to her astonished soul. At this imposing spectacle, her mind expanded, her intelligence became developed, her noble instincts were awakened; and it was *because* her mind became expanded, her intelligence developed, and her noble instincts awakened, that, having a consciousness of her former degradation, she experienced for her past life a torturing and enduring horror, and felt, alas! as she herself said, that "there are stains which can never be effaced!"

"Oh, my unhappiness!" said La Goualeuse, in despair. "My whole life has long to run, perhaps; and were it even as pure and as long as yours, my father, it must henceforth be sullied by the consciousness and memory of the past: yes, misery for me for ever!"

"On the contrary, Marie, happiness is for you; your remorse, so full of bitterness, but so salutary, proves the religious susceptibility of your soul. How many are there who, less nobly endowed than you are, would, in your situation, have speedily forgotten the past, and have thought only of enjoying the *present!* Believe me, each pang that you now endure, will but add to your happiness in the world to come. God has only left you in your evil way for a brief moment, to reserve to you the glory of repentance and the eternal recompense due to expiation. Has he not himself said: 'Those who fight the good fight, and come to me with a smile on their lips, they are my elect; but they who, wounded in the struggle, come to me fainting and dying, they are the elect of my elect.' Courage then, my dear child; support, help, advice, nothing will be wanting to you. I, indeed, am very old; but Madame Georges and M. Rodolph have still long years of life before them; especially M. Rodolph, who has taken so much interest in your welfare, who watches over you with such an enlightened solicitude."

The Goualeuse was about to reply, when she was interrupted by the appearance of the peasant woman of whom we have spoken, who, following the same road as Marie and the curé, now came up with them. She was one of the servants at the farm.

"Pardon, Monsieur the Curé," she said to the priest; "Madame Georges told me to carry this basket of fruit to the parsonage, and said that I could, at the same time, see Mademoiselle Marie home, for it is getting late. I have brought Turk with me," added the woman, caressing an enormous dog of the Pyrenees, capable of overpowering a bear in a struggle. "Although no one is ever molested in this neighbourhood, it's quite as well to be prepared."

"You are right, Claudine; but here we are at the parsonage. You will thank Madame Georges in my name."

Then, lowering his voice, and addressing himself to La Goualeuse, he said, in a grave tone: "To-morrow, I am obliged to attend the diocesan conference; but I shall return at five o'clock. If you wish it, my child, I will await you here, at the parsonage; for I see, by the state of your mind, that you have need of further conversation with me."

"I thank you, my father," replied Fleur-de-Marie; "I will come to-morrow, as you are so kind as to permit me to do so."

"But here we are now, at my garden gate," said the priest. "Set the basket down there, Claudine; my housekeeper will take it in. Return as quickly as you can to the farm with Marie, for it is almost dark, and the cold increases. To-morrow, Marie, at five o'clock."

"To-morrow, my father."

The abbé entered his garden; and La Goualeuse and Claudine, followed by Turk, took the road to the farm.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RENCONTRE.

The night set in clear and frosty. Following the advice of the Schoolmaster, La Chouette had accompanied him to a hollow part of the road, remote from the path leading to the parsonage; and nearest to the cross-road where Barbillon awaited them with the coach. Tortillard, posted on the watch, awaited the return of Fleur-de-Marie, whom he was to draw into the snare by begging her to help him in succouring a poor old woman. The son of Bras Rouge had advanced some steps out of the ravine, the better to look for Marie, when he heard, as he attentively listened, the voice of La Goualeuse speaking to the peasant woman who accompanied her. The plan had failed; and Tortillard hastened down into the ravine again, to run and tell La Chouette.

"May the executioner chop her neck through, the little beggar!" exclaimed La Chouette, in a tone of fury.

"Who is with her?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"That peasant wench, no doubt, who passed along the road just now, followed by the big dog. I heard a woman's voice," said Tortillard. "Hark!—don't you hear the noise of their *sabots?*" And, in fact, in the silence of the night, the wooden shoes sounded clearly upon the frozen ground.

"There are two of them; I can manage the girl in the grey cloak, but the other—how are we to do about the other? *Fourline* can't see, and Tortillard is not strong enough to make *cold meat* of the woman—the devil choke her! What can be done?" asked the Chouette.

"I'm not strong, but if you like, I'll throw myself between the legs of the peasant woman with the dog; I'll hold on there with hands and teeth, and I'll not leave go, depend upon it! While I do that, La Chouette, you can easily drag away the little one!"

"If they call out, or resist, they will be heard at the farm," said the one-eyed hag; "and there will be time for the people there to come and help them, before we can get to Barbillon and

the coach. It's no such easy matter to carry a kicking woman!"

"And they have a big dog with them, too!" said Tortillard.

"Bah, bah! if there were only that, I could settle the brute with a kick," said La Chouette.

"They are close at hand," said Tortillard, again listening to the sound of their footsteps; "they are just descending into the ravine."

"Speak, can't you, *fourline*," said La Chouette to the Schoolmaster; "what do you advise, long-head? Are you dumb as well as blind?"

"Nothing can be done to-day!" responded the brigand.

"And the thousand francs of the gentleman in mourning," cried La Chouette, "are they to go to blazes? That be—— Your knife! your knife *fourline*! I'll kill the woman to prevent her from disturbing us; and as for the little one, Tortillard and I can easily manage to gag and tie her."

"But the man in mourning does not expect us to kill any one."

"Well! can't we put down the blood as an *extra* in his bill? He'll be ready enough to pay us—being a sort of accomplice."

"Here they are—just coming down!" said Tortillard, in a low voice.

"Your knife, my man!" said the Chouette, in a hoarse whisper.

"Oh, La Chouette!" cried Tortillard, in a tone of alarm, and stretching out his arm entreatingly to the one-eyed hag, "that is coming it too strong, to kill her! Oh! no, no! do not do that!"

"Your knife, I tell you!" repeated La Chouette, in a low tone, without heeding the supplications of Tortillard, and hastily putting off her shoes. "I have taken off my shoes," she added, "that I may steal on them quietly from behind; it is already dark, but I shall easily recognise the little one by her light cloak, and I'll soon *settle the hash* of the other."

"No!" said the brigand, decisively, "it is all over for to-day; there will be plenty of time to-morrow."

"What! you are afraid, are you, old devil-skin?" cried La Chouette, with fierce contempt.

"No, I am not afraid," said the Schoolmaster; "but you might fail in your stroke, and spoil all."

The dog which accompanied the peasant-woman, no doubt scenting the persons concealed in the hollow of the road, stopped short, and barked furiously, refusing to come to Fleur-de-Marie, who called him repeatedly.

"Do you hear their infernal dog? Here they are! Your knife!—or, if not——" whispered La Chouette, in a threatening tone.

"Come then, and take it from me—by force!" said the Schoolmaster.

"It is all over; it is too late now," said La Chouette, after listening for a moment; "they have gone by. Ah, gallows-bird, you shall pay for this!" added the fury, shaking her fist at her accomplice. "A thousand francs lost through your stupidity!"

"A thousand—two thousand—perhaps three thousand francs gained!" said the Schoolmaster, in a tone of authority. Listen to me, La Chouette. You will just go and quietly rejoin Barbillon; he will drive you to the rendezvous at which you are to meet the gentleman in mourning, and you will tell him that, though nothing can be done to-day, the girl shall certainly be carried off to-morrow. She goes every evening to conduct the old priest home, and it is only by a mere chance that she this evening has had a companion on her return. To-morrow will give us a better chance; to-morrow, therefore, at the same hour, you will be at the cross-road with Barbillon and his coach."

"But thou—thou?"

"Tortillard shall lead me to the farm where the young girl is living. I will dish up a story: he shall say we have lost our way, and ask leave to sleep in a corner of the stable. Nobody can refuse us that. Tortillard shall carefully examine all the ins and outs of the place. These farm-people have always plenty of money at this season. The farm, you say, is situated in a lone spot; when once we know the ways of it, we can easily return with some friends, and the thing is done as easily ——"

"*Downy* as ever! There's a headpiece for you!" said the Chouette, considerably softened. "Go on, *fourline*."

"To-morrow morning, instead of quitting the farm, I will complain of pain which prevents me from walking. If they do not believe me, I will show them the wound on my leg, that I still retain from smashing the ring of my *darbies*, and which I always suffer from. I will say that that wound is owing to my being struck by a bar of red-hot iron when I was a workman. They cannot help believing me, and I shall be allowed to stay at the farm part of the day, which will give Tortillard time to examine the doors and fastenings the more closely. In the evening, at the hour at which the little girl goes to see the priest home, I will say that I feel able to leave them. I and Tortillard will follow the wench at a distance, and await her return here, in the ravine. Having seen us at the farm, our appearance will not cause her any suspicions. Tortillard and I will speak to her; she will come within our reach, and when I once get hold of her, I will answer for all the rest. She will be caught, safe enough, and we shall have our thousand francs. But that is not all; in two or three days, we can put Barbillon, or some one else, *fly* to the business to be done at the farm, and then take our *regulars* of the *swag* for putting them on the *lay*."

"Ah, 'No-Eyes,' you have not your equal!" said La Chouette, embracing the Schoolmaster. "Your plan is an excellent one! Hark'e, *fourline*, when you grow quite infirm, you must turn *advising-prig*; you will make as much money as any *big-wig* among them. Come, kiss your old woman, and be off to business, for these country folks go to bed with the poultry. I will go to rejoin Barbillon; and to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock, he and I will be at the cross-road with the *drag*, unless he is *grabbed* for helping Gros-Boiteux and the Skeleton to *settle* the milk-woman's husband in the Rue de la Vieille Draperie; and, even should that happen, some one else can drive me down, as the pretended hackney-coach belongs to the tall gentleman in mourning. A quarter of an hour after my arrival at the cross-road, I shall be here waiting for you."

"All right. Good bye till to-morrow, La Chouette."

"Dear me! I had nearly forgotten to give Tortillard the wax to take with him to the farm, in case there should be any locks to imprint," said La Chouette. "Here, little-un, do you know how to use it?" said the one-eyed wretch, handing a bit of wax to Tortillard.

"Yes, yes; my father put me up to that *move*.

I took, for him, the impression of the lock of a little iron box, which my master the quack-doctor keeps in his dark closet."

"Very well; and that it may not stick, take care to moisten it well, after you have heated it in your hand."

"I know, I know," replied Tortillard.

"To-morrow then, *fourline*," said the Chouette.

"To-morrow," replied the Schoolmaster.

La Chouette hastened off to the coach, and the Schoolmaster, led by Tortillard, proceeded towards the farm, guided by the cheerful lights that shone from its windows.

Strange fatality, that thus led Anselm Durenel towards the injured wife who had not seen him since his condemnation to the galleys for life!

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN EVENING AT THE FARM.

PERHAPS there is nothing more cheering and gratifying than the appearance of the kitchen of a large farm-house, at supper-time, during the winter—nothing which can convey a better idea of the calm and the happiness of rural life. Of the truth of this, the farm of Bouqueval afforded a fine proof. Its immense chimney, six feet high, and eight feet wide, resembled the enormous mouth of some glowing furnace, as the pile of oak blazed and crackled on the hearth. This enormous fire-place sent forth as much light as heat into every part of the kitchen, and rendered quite superfluous the burning lamp that was suspended from the vast beam that ran across the ceiling. Ranged on appropriate shelves were every description of cooking utensils, of brass, copper, and tin, shining in all the brightness of elaborate cleanliness, and reflecting the glowing radiance of the winter fire. An old-fashioned copper fountain shone and sparkled like a mirror; while close by stood a highly-polished bread-trough and cover, made of walnut-tree wood, rubbed till you might see your face in it, and from which exhaled a most tempting smell of hot bread. A long and substantial table, covered with an extremely white, coarse table-cloth, occupied the centre of the spacious room; the place of each of the guests being marked by an earthenware plate, brown without and white within, and by a steel knife, fork, and spoon, as bright as silver. In the middle of the table, a huge tureen, filled with vegetable soup, smoked like the crater of a volcano, covering with its savoury steam an immense dish of cabbage and bacon, and a formidable dish of stewed mutton and potatoes. Finally, a roasted quarter of veal, flanked by two large winter salads, faced two baskets of apples and two cheeses, and completed this abundant and inviting repast. Two or three capacious stone-jugs, filled with fine sparkling cider, and as many loaves of white bread, almost as large as mill-stones, were at the discretionary use of the supper-party.

An old shaggy, black sheep-dog, almost toothless, the honoured senior of the canine population of the farm, was allowed to remain at the fire-side, in consideration of his great age and former services. Using this privilege with modesty and moderation, he lay perfectly still, with his muzzle upon his outstretched fore-paws, and watched with attentive eye the various culinary evolutions which preceded the supper. This venenerable dog answered to the pastoral name of Lysander.

Perhaps the *ordinary* of the people of this farm, though very simple, may appear to be rather sumptuous; but Madame Georges, faithfully fulfilling the wishes of Rodolph, did all that was possible to ameliorate the lot of these servants, who were exclusively selected from among the most honest and industrious labourers of the neighbourhood. They were liberally paid, and their treatment was in every respect such as to render their service an enviable one; thus, to be hired at the farm of Bouqueval, was the ambition of all the best labourers for miles around it—an innocent ambition, the more praiseworthy because it tended to the profit of those whom they served, for it was useless to apply for any vacant place on this farm, unless the applicant was provided with an excellent character.

Rodolph had thus created, though on a very small scale, a sort of *model farm;* destined not merely to the improvement of the breeds of animals and of agricultural operations, but also, and more especially, to *the improvement of man:* and this end was attained in making it to the interest of those employed to be honest, active, skilful, and intelligent.

After having completed all the preparations for supper, and placed upon the table a large can of good old wine, to accompany the dessert, the farm-cook rang a loud-toned bell. At this summons, a joyous throng, composed of men, women, and maidens, to the number of twelve or fifteen, gathered round the table; the men had a frank and manly appearance, the women looked healthy and good-humoured, while the young maidens wore the glow of youth and innocence. Every face of this happy party was lighted up with frankness, gaiety, and contentment; and they seemed fully prepared to do honour to the repast which they had fairly earned by the hard toils of the day.

The upper-end of the table was occupied by an old, white-haired labourer, whose bold, free, open expression of countenance bespoke him a fine specimen of the sensible peasant—a genuine descendant of the ancient Gaulish mothers of the soil.

Father Chatelain (for so this Nestor was named) having been constantly employed on the farm from his childhood, was now engaged as foreman. When Rodolph purchased the farm, the old servant was strongly recommended to him; Rodolph, consequently, retained him, and invested him, under Madame Georges, with a sort of superintendence of the details of culture. Father Chatelain, therefore, exercised an influence due alike to his age, his knowledge, his experience, his character, and his delegated power.

All the labourers and servants having now taken their places, after having invoked a blessing, in an audible voice, Father Chatelain, pursuant to an old and pious custom, made a cross upon one of the loaves, and cut from it a piece as the *share of the Virgin*, or for the poor; then, under the same invocation, he poured out a glass of wine, and having placed both the bread and the wine on a plate, it was reverently set in the centre of the table. At this moment the yard-dogs began to bark violently. Old Lysander answered them by a low growl, and, letting fall his lips, displayed two or three still formidable fangs.

"Some one must be passing by the walls of the court-yard," said Father Chatelain.

Scarcely had he uttered the words, ere the bell of the principal entrance was rung.

"Who can come so late?" said the old labourer; "all our own people are in. Go and see who it is, Jean René."

Jean René, a young farm lad, regretfully returned to his plate a spoonful of soup, at which, when spoken to by Chatelain, he was in the act of blowing with a force which would have excited the envy of Æolus, and left the kitchen.

"This is the first evening for a long time that Madame Georges and Mademoiselle Marie have been absent from our fireside at supper-time; I am very hungry, but I shall enjoy my supper all the less for their absence."

"Madame Georges has gone up to Mademoiselle Marie's room; for, on her return from seeing M. le Curé to the parsonage, mademoiselle did not feel well, and so went to bed directly," remarked Claudine, the sturdy peasant woman who had escorted Marie home from the parsonage, and thus, though unconsciously, baffled the sinister scheme of La Chouette.

"Our kind Mademoiselle Marie is not seriously ill, I hope," said the old labourer, anxiously.

"Oh no, she is not, Father Chatelain. Madame Georges says it is only a slight attack," replied Claudine; "if it had been anything serious, she would have sent to Paris for the negro doctor, who was so attentive to Mademoiselle Marie when she was ill. For my part, I couldn't endure a black doctor, nor put the least confidence in him. A white doctor is all very well, and Christian-like; but a black—oh! I should be frightened to death at the very sight of him!"

"But did not M. David cure Mademoiselle Marie, who was very ill and languid when she first came here?"

"Yes, Father Chatelain."

"Well?"

"Nevertheless, there is something very dreadful about a negro doctor—the very idea almost makes me ill."

"And did he not set old Mother Anique upon her legs, though the wounds in them had confined her chiefly to her bed for three years?"

"Yes, yes, Father Chatelain."

"Well, my girl?"

"Yes, Father Chatelain, but still, consider—a black doctor! Only think — black, quite black!"

"Listen, my girl. What colour is your heifer, Musette?"

"White, Father Chatelain—white as a swan, and a famous milcher she is! One may say that without fear of telling a falsehood."

"And your other favourite, Rosette?"

"Black as a raven, Father Chatelain; and she is a famous milcher, too; for we must do justice to all."

"And what colour is the milk of the black heifer?"

"White, Father Chatelain — white as snow, of course."

"As white and as good as that of Musette?"

"Yes."

"Although Rosette is black?"

"Yes, Father Chatelain, although Rosette is black; but, what can the difference be as to the milk, whether the cow be black or white?"

"Well then, my girl, why should not a black doctor be as good as a white one?"

"Well," answered Claudine, after a moment of deep cogitation, "it seemed to me that his skin——but, in fact, as black Rosette gives as good milk as white Musette, the skin can have nothing to do with the matter."

These physiognomical reflections of Claudine, upon the difference between the black and white races, were interrupted by the return to the kitchen of Jean René, who was now as lustily blowing at his cold fingers as he previously had been at his hot soup.

"Oh, how cold! how bitter cold it is, to-night!" said Jean René, as he entered the kitchen; "it freezes sharp enough to pierce a wall. The inside of the house is much more comfortable than the outside, in such weather as this. Oh, how cold it is!"

"A frost that comes in with a wind will be hard and long," said Father Chatelain; "you should know that, my lad. But who rang the bell?"

"A poor blind man, and a little boy who leads him, Father Chatelain."

"And what does this blind man want?" asked Father Chatelain of Jean René.

"The poor man and his son were going by the cross-roads to Louvres, and have lost their way in trying to make a short cut. As it is cold enough to freeze a white bear, and as the night is very dark, they have come to ask leave to pass the night at the farm, in a corner of the stables."

"Madame Georges is so kind, that she never refuses hospitality to the unfortunate; there is no doubt that she will shelter this poor man and his son, but her leave must be asked. Go and mention it to her, Claudine."

Claudine disappeared upon her errand.

"And where is the poor fellow waiting?" asked Father Chatelain.

"In the little barn."

"And why did you put him into the barn?"

"If I had left him in the court-yard, the dogs would have eaten him and his boy up alive! Yes, Father Chatelain, I never saw anything like it. It was in vain for me to say: 'Quiet Medor, here Turk, down Sultan!' I never saw such savages as they are to-night. And yet they are never taught here, as they are at many farms, to fly at poor people."

"Faith, my children," said the kind-hearted old Chatelain, "the *poor man's share* has been very properly reserved this evening. Sit a little closer—there, that'll do; now, lay two more plates—one for the poor blind man, and one for his son; for certainly Madame Georges will let them pass the night here."

"Well, after all," said Jean René, "there is something very strange about the furious manner of the dogs—especially Turk, that Claudine took to the parsonage this evening; he was just as though he were mad. When I patted him, to try to appease him, the hair of his back was bristled up like the quills of a porcupine. Now what do you, who know almost everything, think of that, Father Chatelain?"

"Why, my lad, I, *who know almost everything*, think that the dogs themselves know more about their ill-temper than I do. Beasts are very sagacious. At the time of the storm in the autumn, when the little river was suddenly changed into an immense torrent, as I was coming home with my horses, at dark night, riding on old Cuckoo, the devil take me if I should have known how to hit upon the ford, for you could see no farther than you could in an oven. Well, I threw the bridle on the neck of old Cuckoo, and he found by himself what, I'll answer for it, neither I nor any one else could have found for him. Now, who taught the dumb animal the safe

and the unsafe parts of the ford, let me ask you?"

"Yes, indeed, Father Chatelain, who could have taught the old roan horse that?"

"The same Almighty Wisdom that has taught the swallows to build their nests in the eaves of the roofs, and the water-wagtails to build theirs in the midst of the reeds, my lad. Well, Claudine!" said the aged oracle of the farm to the sturdy milkmaid, who at this moment returned bearing on her arm two pairs of snow-white sheets, from which was wafted an odoriferous smell of sage and thyme, "well, Madame Georges has ordered supper and shelter here for the poor blind man and his son, has she not?"

"Here are the sheets to put upon their beds, in the little room at the end of the passage," said Claudine.

"Now then, Jean René," said Father Chatelain, "go and tell the poor man and his son to come in. And you, Claudine, my girl, put two chairs near the fire; no doubt the poor creatures will be glad of a good warm before sitting down to table."

The furious barking of the dogs was now heard, mingled with the shouts of Jean René, who was vainly endeavouring to pacify them. The door of the kitchen was hastily thrown open, and Tortillard and the Schoolmaster entered precipitately, as though they had been pursued.

"Pray keep your dogs off!" cried the Schoolmaster, in great alarm; "they have been trying to bite us."

"They have torn a piece out of my blouse," said Tortillard, who was still pale with fright.

"Excuse it, my good man," said Jean René, shutting the door; "I never saw our dogs so savage before. It must be the coldness of the night that makes them so sharp; the poor brutes have no reason, and perhaps they think to warm themselves by biting some one."

"And here goes the other at it now!" cried Chatelain, as he laid hold of Lysander, who started from his snug berth before the fire, and, growling fiercely, was about to fly at the strangers. "The old dog has heard the others barking so furiously, that I suppose he thinks he must do the same. Go and lie down, you old savage—lie down, sir!"

As these words were accompanied by a very significant kick, Lysander, still growling, regained his favourite place before the fire. All this time, Tortillard and the Schoolmaster, afraid to venture any farther, had remained trembling at the kitchen door. The features of the Schoolmaster were so truly hideous, that for an instant some of the peasants were struck with alarm, while others recoiled with disgust. This impression did not escape Tortillard; the fear of the villagers served to reassure him — he felt proud of the alarm that was inspired by his companion. This first sensation over, Father Chatelain, solely intent upon the duties of hospitality, said to the Schoolmaster: "Come up to the fire, my good man, and warm yourself first of all, and then you can sup with us; for, luckily, you have just come as we were about to begin. Here, sit down. But what is my silly old head running upon?" added Father Chatelain. "It is not to you, but to your son, that I should speak, as you are unfortunately blind. Here, my boy, bring your poor father up to the fireside."

"Yes, my kind gentleman," replied the artful urchin, in a whining, nasal, and hypocritical tone; "may God preserve you for your charity to the poor blind! Come with me, poor father—come with me; take care how you step, gently!" and the boy guided the steps of the miscreant with affected care and tenderness, till they both reached the ample chimney-place. At first, Lysander contented himself with significantly growling his dislike of the new-comers; but, after scenting the Schoolmaster for an instant, he broke out suddenly into that long, dismal cry, in which dogs are commonly said to *howl for death*.

"Hell and the devil!" muttered the Schoolmaster, "can these accursed animals smell the blood? Now I recollect, I had on these pantaloons on the night that the grazier was murdered."

"Did you observe?" whispered Jean René; "it is very strange, that the moment old Lysander caught scent of the old man, he should set up the death-howl!"

And as he spoke, a strange occurrence seemed to confirm his words. The cries of Lysander were so long, loud, and mournful, that the other dogs heard him (for the farm-yard was only separated from the kitchen by a glazed window in the latter), and, according to the custom of the canine race, they loudly echoed his melancholy wail. Although but little given to superstition, the peasants looked at each other with wonder and affright. The Schoolmaster himself, notwithstanding his callousness and infernal audacity, shuddered for an instant on hearing the funereal and death-predicting howlings that hailed the arrival of him — the self-convicted assassin; while Tortillard, impudent, sceptical, and corrupted, so to speak, at his mother's teat—Tortillard, a real and downright Parisian scamp, alone, of all present, remained utterly insensible to the moral effect of this scene. Delivered from the fear of being bitten by the dogs, the mocking abortion laughed in his sleeve at what caused so much alarm and perplexity to the inhabitants of the farm, and even a momentary shudder of convulsive horror to the Schoolmaster himself. The momentary stupor past, Jean René went out into the court-yard, and the loud cracking of his whip soon put an end to the lugubrious presentiments of the good dogs Turk, Medor, and Sultan. By degrees, the constrained and perplexed countenances of the labourers cleared up, and, in the course of a few minutes, the frightful hideousness of the Schoolmaster inspired more of pity than of horror; they pitied the poor little lame boy for his infirmity, saw something very interesting in his sharp visage, and greatly admired him for the anxious attentions which he bestowed upon "his poor afflicted father." The appetite of the labourers, which had been momentarily forgotten, returned with new energy, and for some time nothing was heard but the clatter of knives and forks. Still, while playing their very best part upon the substantial meal that was before them, both males and females remarked, with a tender interest, the attention of the boy to his "poor blind father," by whom he was seated. Tortillard cut up his bread and meat for him, and poured out and handed to him his drink, with the most filial attention imaginable. But for all this kindness and attention, the young ruffian took ample and bitter revenge. Instigated as much by a natural spirit of cruelty as the desire of imitation so natural at his age, Tortillard experienced an equal enjoyment with the Chouette, in having something to torment—a *beast of suffering* like the Schoolmaster, who might aptly be

compared to a muzzled tiger—one over whom he could tyrannise in the exulting plenitude of his wretchedly depraved mind. He had the profoundly villanous idea of refining upon his cruel delight by forcing the Schoolmaster to endure his ill-treatment without even frowning. Thus he accompanied each outward expression of tenderness towards his supposed father, by every now and then inflicting upon the Schoolmaster a severe kick, under cover of the table; especially aiming at the wound which the wretched man, like many other old convicts, bore upon his right leg, at the part on which he had worn the heavy ring by which he was attached to the chain during his imprisonment at the galleys; and by way of compelling the sufferer to exercise a greater degree of stoical courage, the urchin always seized the moment when the object of his malice was either speaking or drinking.

"Here, poor father, here is a nut nicely shelled and skinned," said Tortillard, in a tone of whining affection, as he placed one upon the Schoolmaster's plate.

"That's a good boy," said Father Chatelain; and then, addressing the Schoolmaster, the excellent old man said: "No doubt, poor man, you are very much to be pitied; but it must, nevertheless, be some consolation to you to have so excellent a son!"

"Yes, yes, my misfortune is great," said the brigand, "and but for the tenderness of my dear boy, I——"

Here the agony of the Schoolmaster was such, that he could not refrain from uttering a sharp cry. This time, the lame imp had succeeded in kicking him on the very centre of his wound, producing pain absolutely maddening.

"Father! what is the matter, my poor dear father?" asked Tortillard, in a half-crying tone; and he rose from the table, and threw his arms round the neck of the Schoolmaster, who in the first fierce impulse of rage, resolved to strangle the little wretch in his Herculean arms; and so closely, and with such fell savageness did he press him to his huge chest, that the boy, all but strangled, uttered a hollow groan. But reflecting, in time, that he could not do without Tortillard, the Schoolmaster restrained his rage, and simply pushed his tormentor back into his own chair. In all this, the simple peasants had perceived nothing more than an interchange of paternal and filial tenderness; and the pallor and half-strangulation of Tortillard were attributed to the excessive emotion of this *excellent child*, at the sudden illness of his father.

"What is the matter with you, my good man?" asked the kind-hearted old Chatelain; "the cry you gave just now, actually made your poor boy turn pale. Poor little fellow, I declare he can hardly breathe."

"It is nothing," said the Schoolmaster, who had now regained his usual coolness. "I am a working locksmith by trade, and some time ago, while I was still able to work, I was hammering a bar of hot iron, which fell upon my leg; and so bad was the wound it inflicted, that it has never since healed up. Just now, I chanced to hit my leg against the foot of the table, and the sudden pain was such as to force me to cry out."

"Poor dear father!" said Tortillard, recovering from his emotion, as he cast a diabolical glance upon the Schoolmaster; "poor father! Ah, kind gentlemen, it is but too true that he has never been able to get his leg cured. Alas! never. Oh, I wish I could bear the pain for him, poo dear father!"

The women looked at Tortillard tenderly, and almost with tears in their eyes.

"It is unfortunate for you, my honest man," said Chatelain, addressing the Schoolmaster, "that you had not chanced to come here about three weeks ago, instead of this evening."

"Why so?"

"Because, at that time, we had stopping here, for some days, a doctor from Paris, who has a sovereign remedy for all ailments of the legs. There was a good old lady in our village, who had been unable to walk for three years past; the doctor applied his unguent to her wounds, and now she walks as nimbly as a young girl, and says that she will soon go on foot to Paris, to thank her saviour, who lives in the Allée des Veuves, and that is a pretty smart step from here, you must own. But what is the matter with you now?—that confounded wound again?"

The mention of the Allèe des Veuves had awakened such terrible recollections in the mind of the Schoolmaster, that he had been unable to repress the expression of his emotion by a shudder, and a visible contraction of his hideous features.

"Yes," replied he, trying to conceal his emotion, "I had another terrible shooting pain, just then; but pray proceed."

"Yes," resumed old Chatelain, "it is a real pity that you did not chance to come while that excellent doctor was here; but he is as charitable as he is skilful, and if, when you go to Paris, you get your son to lead you to his house, I am sure he will cure you. His address is easily to be found out: No. 17, Allèe des Veuves. If you even forget the number, it will not much matter; there are not many doctors in that quarter, and more especially, there are not many negro doctors, for, strange as you may think it, this kind-hearted and skilful doctor, M. David, is a negro."

The countenance of the Schoolmaster was so deeply and profusely scarred, that the ghastly paleness to which he now turned, could with difficulty be perceived. He did, however, turn frightfully pale, as he heard Chatelain speak of the number of the house, and of that M. David, who, by order of Rodolph, had deprived him of his sight, who had inflicted upon him that dreadful punishment of which he was every instant experiencing such terrible consequences. Father Chatelain, who had not perceived the brigand's paleness, and therefore had no suspicion of the state of his feelings, resumed: "However, when you leave us, I will give the written address of the doctor to your son, and M. David will even feel gratified in being able to render you a service. He is so kind—never so happy as when he is enabled to relieve suffering. I wish he had not always that sad and melancholy look. I fear he has some heavy sorrow at his heart. But come, friend, let us drink to the health and happiness of your future benefactor!"

"Thank you, I am not thirsty now," said the Schoolmaster, sullenly.

"Ah!" said Chatelain, heartily, "but it is not cyder that I offer you—it is good old wine; there are not many tradesmen who can get such, I can assure you. Our farm is not like farms in general. What do you think of our living?"

"It is very good," said the Schoolmaster,

mechanically, for he was becoming more and more absorbed in his sinister thoughts.

"Well, this is the way in which we live every day. We work well, live well, have a good conscience, and an equally good bed to go to after the labours of the day. This is our life. There are seven of us labourers here; and without boasting, I may say that we do the work of fourteen, but then we are also paid for the work of fourteen. To common labourers our good master gives a hundred and fifty crowns a month, and to the dairy-women and other females about the farm, sixty; and then we divide equally among us all, a tenth of the profits of the farm You will easily believe that we do not let an inch of the land lie idle; for the more the good old nurse Nature produces, the more we have to share among us."

"Your master cannot enrich himself much, I should think, if he is so liberal to you," said the Schoolmaster.

"Our master? Oh, he is not like others; he has a way of enriching himself peculiarly his own."

"How do you mean?" said the blind man, anxious to engage in conversation, that he might escape from the torture of his own thoughts; "your master must be a very extraordinary man."

"Extraordinary in everything, my good friend. Now, mere chance has brought you to this house, lying, as we do, so much out of the main road: it is most likely that you will never return here; so I will not let you go without at least knowing what our master is, and what he has done with this farm—not as a secret, but on condition that you repeat it to all whom you may meet. You will see—that is, you will then be able to understand all about it."

"I am all attention," said the Schoolmaster.

"And you will not be sorry to have heard what I shall tell you, I can promise you," said Father Chatelain to the Schoolmaster. "Just fancy, that one day our master said to himself: 'I am rich, and that is a very good thing; but as my riches cannot make me dine twice a day, what if I give food to those who do not dine at all, and enable worthy men to live well, who now, in spite of all their efforts, fare badly? Ah, that is a pleasure which will just suit me—so I'll set about it at once.' And our master did set to work accordingly. He bought this farm, which was then in no very flourishing state, employing only two ploughs; and being born and bread in the place, I should know something about it. Then our master bought more land, and added to the farm. You will presently see with what view he did so. At the head of the farm he placed a worthy woman, as respectable as she has been unfortunate—it is always such persons that he selects—and he said to her: 'This house, like the house of God, is to be opened to all the good, and closed against all the hardened and bad; all idle beggars are to be driven away from it, but to the honest and industrious it shall always afford the *charity of employment*: that charity does not degrade the receiver, and profits the giver; and he is a bad rich man who does not afford that charity.' It was our master who said that, and he said rightly; but he did better than merely saying good words—he acted upon them. Formerly there was a direct road from our village to Ecouen, which shortened the distance by a league, but it was so cut up, so furrowed, in such an utterly bad state, that to pass along it was perfect cruelty to the poor horses, and ruin to the vehicles. Some labour and a trifling amount of money from each of the farmers around us would have sufficed to put the road into good condition; but each of them was just as reluctant to help in putting it into order, as he was desirous of seeing that done at the expense of any one but himself. Our master, perceiving this, said: 'The road shall be repaired, but as it will benefit those who ought to contribute towards it, but will not, and who have their horses and vehicles, at all events it shall first of all benefit those who have nothing but their two arms, heart to work, and yet no work to do. So, for instance, supposing a sturdy fellow to knock at the farm-door, and say: 'I am hungry, and in want of work,' he shall have for his reply: 'Here, my lad, here is a good meal, and there are a pickaxe and a spade; one of these men will show you our road to Ecouen, if you do not know it; every day do two toises of paving, and every evening you shall have forty sous; do only one toise, and you shall have twenty sous; only half a one, and you shall have only ten sous; do none, and you shall have nothing.' Then, towards evening, I used to go to the road, to examine and measure their work."

"Ah! and only to think that there were two lazy fellows vile enough to eat their meal, and then steal the pickaxe and spade!" said Jean René, indignantly.

"Yes, that they did," exclaimed several other labourers.

"Well, but, my lads," resumed Father Chatelain, "shall we neither sow nor plant, because the wireworm, the caterpillar, and other de vouring insects exist? No, no; we will not abstain from sowing and planting—we do a better thing, we destroy the insects. The great God, who is no niggard of his bounty, causes the plant to shoot up again, and the tree to put out new buds; the damage is soon repaired, and we cannot even perceive where the mischievous insects have passed on their destroying journey. Am I not right, my friend?" said the old labourer to the Schoolmaster.

"No doubt, no doubt," replied the latter, who for some moments appeared to be lost in deep reflection.

"As for women and children," resumed Chatelain, "there is also work for them, proportioned to their age and strength."

"And, notwithstanding," said Claudine, joining in this conversation, "the road does not advance very rapidly."

"Well, my girl," said Chatelain, "that only proves that, fortunately, there are not many honest men in the neighbourhood who are in want of employment."

"But an infirm and helpless creature, like myself, for instance," said the Schoolmaster, suddenly—"would the charity of your master grant me a corner at your fire, and a shelter for the short time I have to live? Oh, my kind people, if this could be, if I could obtain such a boon, I would pass my whole life in blessing and in thanking your good master."

And, at the moment, the words of the brigand were perfectly sincere. Not that his heart was touched by remorse for his crimes, but the peaceable and happy existence of these labourers strongly excited his envy, when he reflected upon the frightful future intended for him by La Chouette—a future which he had been so far from foreseeing, and which made him the more regret

that, by his recalling his accomplice to him, and putting himself in her power, he had for ever rendered it impossible to live with the honest people to whom the Chourineur had introduced him. Father Chatelain looked at the Schoolmaster with astonishment.

"Why, my poor man, I did not suppose that you were so utterly without resources?"

"Alas! it is indeed too true. I lost my sight by accident, whilst working at my trade. I am now on my way to Louvres, where I have a distant relation, who may perhaps assist me; but, you know—you understand—people are sometimes so selfish and hard-hearted," said the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, but surely the most selfish could not withhold succour in such a case as yours," replied Father Chatelain; "a good and honest workman like you, overtaken by a sudden calamity, and left helpless and without hope. Your poor child too, so gentle and so good, your only friend and guide, would draw pity from a heart of stone. But how is it that the master with whom you worked at the time of your sad accident, has done nothing for you?"

"He is dead," said the Schoolmaster, after a moment's hesitation; "and, alas! he was my only friend and protector."

"But there is the hospital for the blind."

"I am not old enough for admission."

"Poor man, you are, indeed, much to be pitied."

"Well, do you think that, if I fail of procuring at Louvres the succour that I hope your good master, whom I already respect, though I do not know him, would take pity upon me?"

"Why, unfortunately, you see, the farm is not a hospital. All that is commonly granted here to the infirm, are food and shelter for a day and a night; that done, they have a trifle given them, and we set them on their road, in the hope and with the prayer that a kind Providence will aid them."

"Then you think there is no hope of interesting your master in my sad fate?" said the brigand, with a sigh of regret.

"I only tell you the general rule, my good man; but our master is so kind and compassionate, that he is capable of any goodness."

"Do you think it?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster; "is it possible that he may allow me to live here in some corner? So little, so very little would content me!"

"As I said before, our master is capable of any degree of goodness. Should he consent to your remaining here at the farm, you will have no occasion to hide yourself in a corner; you will fare in every respect as you have done to-day. Some employment, in that case, would be found suitable to your boy's strength. Good advice and good example would not be wanting for him; our venerable curé would instruct him with the other children of the village, and he would grow up, as we say, in well-doing. But to bring all this about, mind you, it is necessary that to-morrow morning you speak out freely, and state all the particulars of your case, to our 'Lady of Ready Help.'"

"How!" said the Schoolmaster.

"That is the title we give to our mistress. If she interest herself for you, your request will be granted; in matters of charity, our master never refuses anything to her."

"Oh then, I will speak to her, I will speak to her!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in a joyous tone, fancying himself already delivered from the tyranny of La Chouette.

This hope and joy found no echo in the heart of Tortillard, who did not feel at all disposed to profit by the advantages held out to him by the old labourer, and to grow up in well-doing under the auspices of the venerable curé. The son of Bras Rouge had tastes by no means rustic, and a mind as little as possible given to the pastoral; moreover, faithful to the moral code of La Chouette, he would have been sorely hurt to see the Schoolmaster withdraw himself from their joint despotism; and he wished, therefore, to recal the brigand, who was already revelling in flowery meads and rustic illusions, to his real position.

"Oh yes," said the Schoolmaster, "I will speak to your 'Lady of Ready Help;' she will take pity upon me, and ——"

At this moment Tortillard interrupted him by a vigorous and artful kick in the old place, so well directed that it took the direst effect upon the Schoolmaster. Intense agony for a time deprived him of utterance; but presently recovering himself, he added, in a voice faint and full of suffering: "Yes, I will hope that this good lady will have pity upon me."

"Poor dear father, said Tortillard, "but do you then quite forget my kind aunt, Madame la Chouette, who is so fond of you. Poor Aunt la Chouette — oh, she will not desert you like that, depend upon it! Far more likely would she be to come here with our cousin, M. Barbillon, to take you away."

"Madame la Chouette and M. Barbillon! Why this good man seems to have relations among the birds and fishes!" said Jean René, in a voice of frightful irony, giving his neighbour rather a vigorous poke with his elbow. "Very droll, isn't it, Claudine?"

"Get out, you great unfeeling booby you!" said Claudine, returning the elbow-thrust with force enough to have endangered the safety of two or three of the ribs of a weak man; "how can you make game of such poor creatures?"

"Is Madame la Chouette a relation of yours?" inquired the old labourer of the Schoolmaster.

"Yes, a distant one," said he, with a sad and dull expression in his voice and manner.

"And is she the relation whom you are going to seek at Louvres?" asked Father Chatelain.

"Yes," said the brigand; "but I much fear that my son reckons too much upon her interest on my account. However, at all events that will not prevent me from speaking to the kind lady here to-morrow, and asking her interest with the charitable proprietor of this farm. But," added he, in order to turn the conversation, and put an end to the mischievous and impudent remarks of Tortillard, "speaking about the proprietor of this farm, did you not, my kind friend, promise that you would describe to me the peculiarities of its arrangements?"

"Yes, I did," said Father Chatelain, "and I will be as good as my word. Our master, after having imagined what he calls the *charity of labour*, said to himself: "There are establishments and prizes for improving horses, cattle, sheep, ploughs, and many other things, and I cannot help thinking that it is high time to adopt some means to improve men. Good beasts are good things, no doubt; good men, still better, and far more difficult to meet with. Dry pasture, sound corn, pure air and water, constant care

and shelter, with these, horses and cattle will improve their condition to your heart's content; but to improve men—that is quite another matter. You cannot enlarge a man's mind as you can increase the weight of an ox. The herbage benefits the beast because, savoury to his taste, it pleases while it fattens him. My opinion is, that to make good advice profitable to man, it is requisite that he should feel it to his interest to be guided by it."

"Just as the beast finds it to his interest to eat the excellent grass, Father Chatelain?" said several voices.

"Exactly so, my lads."

"But, Father Chatelain," said another labourer, "I have heard talk of a sort of farm where young thieves were kept, who, notwithstanding, conducted themselves well, were taught agriculture, and were taken care of like young princes."

"That is true, my good fellow, and a great deal of benefit there was in that institution. It is humane and charitable never to despair even of the wicked; but then, at least as much ought to be done for the good. A strong, honest, and industrious young man, ready and willing to work, should he present himself at this refuge-farm for young thieves, they would say to him: 'My lad, have you robbed and vagabondized?' 'No.' 'Well then, we can't receive you here—we have no room for honest lads.'"

"Ah, what you say there is very true, Father Chatelain," said Jean René; "that is done for knaves which is not done for honest men; the condition of beasts is improved and cared for, while men are passed over, and left to ignorance and starvation!"

"It was for the purpose of example in remedying that evil, my lad, as I am telling this poor man, that our master established this farm. 'I know very well,' said he, 'that on high there are rewards for honest men; but then that is so very far off, and there are some, who are to be pitied, who can neither look to such a distance, nor wait with patience the indefinite period which bids them live on hope alone. Then, how are these poor, heart-sick, starved, toil-worn creatures to find leisure or inclination to seek religious comfort? During the live-long day, from sunrise to dark, they are bent down to the earth, which they dig, or sow, or plant, or weed, or reap for a master; and at night, worn out, they lie down upon their miserable beds. On Sundays they endeavour to forget their miseries in the drunkenness and debauchery of the public-house. And it is thus that their sufferings are rendered unproductive of any moral inculcation. After a hard day's work, continued even beyond their strength, is their bread less coarse, their bed less hard, their infant child less sickly, their wife less exhausted and attenuated by half nourishing it? No, no, no! Alas! the wretched mother, who is often obliged to dispense her portion of the scanty meal, to still the clamours of her ill-fed little ones, is but poorly calculated to afford nourishment to another. I know that, though their bread is black and coarse, it still is bread; I know that their bed is a wretched one, but it still is a bed; and though their children are hungry and ill-nurtured, at least they live. Perhaps the unfortunates would even bear their miseries lightly, did no comparison arise between their own condition and that of others; but they go to the city or town on the market-day, and there they see white bread, soft and warm beds and covering, children rosy and blooming as the flowers of May, and so abundantly, so over abundantly provided for, that they throw food to the very dogs in the streets. Ah! human endurance gives way at this sad contrast in the condition of human beings; and when the poor creatures, having seen these things, return to their black bread and their wretched homes, they say to themselves, as they look upon their pale, emaciated, and stunted children, to whom they would have been glad to carry even but a morsel of the food which they saw wantonly and wastefully bestowed upon dogs: 'As it is necessary that there should be rich and poor, why were we not born rich? Why is this difference allowed? Why does not each of us have his turn in worldly prosperity?' Now, no doubt these words are both sinful and unreasonable, and it is equally true that they in nowise lighten their burthens; and yet this heavy load which so oppresses, and crushes, and wounds them, must be borne without relaxation, and even without the hope that they, at some future time of their lives, will be relieved from it, and know for one day, but for one single day, the happiness that springs from ease. Their whole life to pass thus! It seems as wearisome as a whole, long day of rain, without even one momentary ray of sunshine. Then they go again to their hard and ill-paid toil with disgust and loathing, and most of them say to themselves: 'What does it signify to us, whether the harvest is good or bad—whether the ears of corn be heavy or light? Why should we do more than we are forced to do, or trouble our heads with matters that only concern our master's interest?—it is enough for us that we keep ourselves honest. We will not commit any crime, for fear of the law; and on the other hand, we will not strive to do good, because there is no recompense provided by law for such as perform acts of goodness.' Doubtless, my lads, this mode of arguing is natural enough, but then, as society is at present constituted, it is unwholesome and wrong; the distance is but short from such thoughts to idleness, and from idleness to vice the distance is still shorter. Unfortunately, among the class I have been describing, the majority consists of those whose conduct may be considered as neither good nor bad, that is to say, without any fixed principles; consequently, a little will suffice to make them either virtuous or vicious. 'These are the very individuals,' continued our master, 'we ought to try to improve, no less than if they had the honour and advantage of being animals with hoofs, horns, or woolly coats. Let us make it the *interest* of the poor to be active, prudent, laborious, well instructed, and devoted to their duties; let us prove to them that even in a physical point of view they will be happier—every one will gain by our doing so, the rich as well as the poor, the employer as well as the employed. In order to render good advice really useful to the poor, let us give them *here below*, some slight foretaste of the happiness which awaits the just *on high*.' Having well considered and matured his plan, our master made it known in the district, that he wanted six male and as many female farm-servants; but that he wished to select them from among the best characters in the neighbourhood, such characters to be strictly certified by the magistrates or clergymen of the place. He promised the pay of princes, board equal to that of prosperous tradesmen, and the division among all the labourers of a tenth of the

produce of the farm. Those who should be fortunate enough to be selected, were to remain at the farm for two years, and then to make room for others, chosen in the same way; but, at the expiration of five years, the former labourers might again present themselves as candidates for admission, if there were any vacancies. Thus, from the first foundation of the farm upon this footing, all the labourers in the neighbourhood have said to themselves: 'Let us be active, honest, and laborious; let us become conspicuous for good conduct, and some day we shall obtain places at the farm of Bouqueval. There we shall live in perfect happiness for two years; we shall complete ourselves in every branch of our calling; we shall put by a good sum of money, and, beyond all that, when it comes to our turn to leave Bouqueval, every one will be anxious to hire us, because they know that, to be admitted on the establishment, we must have had the best of characters.'"

"I'm engaged beforehand, by M. Dubreuil, to go to the farm of Arnouville," said Jean René.

"And I am engaged for Gonesse," said another labourer.

"You see, my good friend, every one gains by this plan—the farmers of the neighbourhood in particular. There are only a dozen places here, it is true, but the hope of getting them forms perhaps fifty or threescore good and skilful characters in the neighbourhood; and they who do not get the places will still remain good and skilful, will they not? Why, for one animal which gains its owner a prize, at least a hundred are rendered fit to contend for that prize. Well, those which do *not* gain the prize, do they not still retain the superior qualities which their owners gave them, in the hope that they would do so? Now, friend," said Father Chatelain, having fairly talked himself out, "was I not right, when I told you that our farm is not a common farm, and that our master is no ordinary master?"

"Indeed, there cannot be a doubt of it," cried the Schoolmaster; "and the more I hear of his wisdom and generosity, the more am I led to hope that he will be induced to pity my sad fate. A man who does good, at once so generously and so wisely, will scarcely think much of one good action the more. But, pray let me at least know his name, and that of our 'Lady of Ready Help,' that I may beforehand bless those noble names; for I am certain that minds so bent upon good deeds will have pity on me."

"I'd lay anything now, that you expect to hear some high-sounding names that have made a vast noise in the world! but no, those names are simple as those of the saints. Our 'Lady of Ready Help' is Madame Georges, and our excellent master is plain M. Rodolph."

"My wife, and my destroyer!" muttered the Schoolmaster, thunderstruck at hearing those words. "Rodolph! Madame Georges!!"

The blind wretch could not enjoy even the temporary and fallacious comfort of supposing that he was misled by an accidental similarity of names; for, previous to condemning him to his fearful punishment, Rodolph had told him how strong an interest he took in Madame Georges. Moreover, the recent presence of the negro doctor at the farm, was of itself conclusive proof that the Schoolmaster did not labour under any mistake in the matter. He recognized a something fatal and providential in this last coincidence, which so suddenly and so completely overturned all the hopes which for a moment he had ventured to base upon the generosity of the master of the farm of Bouqueval. His first impulse was to fly. The name of Rodolph had inspired him with the most invincible terror. Perhaps at this very moment that dreaded personage might be at the farm! Scarcely had the brigand recovered from the first stupor of his surprise and alarm, ere he arose, seized the lame boy's hand, and wildly exclaimed: "Let us go away!—lead me out—let us begone from here!"

The labourers all looked at him with astonishment.

"Go?" said Father Chatelain. "My poor man, you surely cannot think of such a thing! Ah! what whim have you taken now? You surely cannot be in your right senses, when you talk of going."

Tortillard instantly availed himself of this last suggestion, heaved a long sigh, and made an affirmative gesture with his head; then putting his hand to his forehead, he thus gave the labourers to understand that the brain of his pretended father was by no means too sound. The old labourer responded by a gesture of mingled intelligence and compassion.

"Come, come, let us get hence!" replied the Schoolmaster, endeavouring to drag the boy along with him. Tortillard, quite positively resolved not to quit so satisfactory a berth for the certainty of finding his night's lodging on the frost and snow of the fields, said, in a whimpering voice: "Oh dear, oh dear, my poor father, be calm; your fit is coming on again. Do not think of going out this weather, and so late too! It would do you so much harm, and perhaps be the death of you! Oh, dear father, I prefer even the pain of being disobedient to you, to leading you out at such an hour, on so cold a night! Then, addressing himself to the labourers, he said: "Will none of you, kind gentlemen, help to prevent my poor dear father from going out to-night?"

"Oh yes, make yourself easy about that, my poor boy," said Father Chatelain; "we will not open the door for your father. He will be forced to stay here to-night, in spite of himself."

"Surely you will not force me to remain here?" continued the Schoolmaster. "Besides, I should only be troublesome to your master, Monsieur Rodolph. You told me the farm is not a hospital; once more then, I tell you, I must go on my way."

"Trouble our master?—that you would not, I am sure. Be in no fear about that. Unfortunately for us, he does not live here; neither do we see him half as often as we should like. But even if he were here, your presence would make no difference to him."

"Oh no, no," persisted the blind man, with increased alarm; "I have changed my mind about applying to him. My son was quite right; my relation at Louvres will certainly have pity on my awful condition, and take care of me. I will go there at once."

"All that I have got to say," replied Father Chatelain, good-naturedly, for he was now quite convinced that he had to do with a man whose brain was slightly affected, "is merely this—that to attempt to proceed on your journey with your child to-night, is wholly out of the question. Come, come, the matter is settled now, so say no more about it."

Although assured that Rodolph was not at Bouqueval, the terrors of the Schoolmaster were not altogether calmed. Frightfully as he was disfigured, he still feared that his wife would recognize him. She might at any instant enter the kitchen; and should she do so, and recognize him, he felt quite persuaded that she would denounce him, and give him into custody, for he had all along been of opinion, that Rodolph, in the infliction of his horrible punishment, had done it to gratify the hatred and vengeance of Madame Georges. But the brigand, unable to quit the farm, was now completely at the mercy of Tortillard. Resigning himself, therefore, to the inevitable necessity of staying, but anxious to avoid being surprised by his wife, he said to Chatelain, the venerable labourer: "Since you assure me that my staying here will not be troublesome either to your master or mistress, I accept the hospitality that you are so kind as to offer me; but, as I am much fatigued, I will go to bed, if you will permit me, as I wish to set out at daybreak in the morning."

"Oh, at any time that you please in the morning—we are very early here; and for fear you should again miss your way, some one shall go a short distance on the road with you."

"If you have no objection," said Jean René, addressing Father Chatelain, "I can take the good man a smart step on his road, for Madame Georges has ordered me to take the light cart, to bring a large sum of money from the notary at Villiers le Bel."

"You can put this poor man some distance on his road, but you must do so on foot," replied Father Chatelain; "for your mistress has now changed her mind about the money, and has very rightly reflected that it is not worth while to have so large a sum at the farm before it is wanted. Next Monday will be quite soon enough to go to Villiers le Bel; till then the money is as well with the notary as it would be here."

"Madame knows better than I do what is best; but yet, what is there to fear for the safety of the money here, Father Chatelain?"

"Nothing, my lad, God be praised, nothing! Nevertheless, I can assure you, that now, or at any other time, I would rather have five hundred sacks of corn here than ten bags of crowns. But come," said old Chatelain, addressing himself to the brigand and Tortillard, "come, follow me, my friend—and you too, my little lad." Then, taking a small lamp, he led the blind man and the lame boy into a little room on the ground-floor, at the end of a long passage, into which several doors opened.

Placing the light upon the table, the old labourer said to the Schoolmaster: "Here is your lodging, and may God give you a peaceful repose, my good friend! As to you, my boy, at your age you are sure to sleep well."

The brigand, gloomy and pensive, sat down upon the edge of the bed, to which he was conducted by Tortillard. At the moment when Father Chatelain was quitting the room, Tortillard made him a sign that he had something to say to him in private, and quickly rejoined him in the passage.

"What do you want to say to me, my little fellow?" asked the good-natured Chatelain.

"Ah! my kind gentleman, I am much to be pitied. I only wanted to say that my poor father is sometimes seized with convulsive fits during the night. I am not strong enough to hold him by myself, and if I should want assistance, is there anybody near who could hear me?"

Poor little fellow," said the labourer, sympathisingly, "don't be alarmed. You see the door there, by the side of the staircase?"

"Yes, my kind gentleman, I see it."

"Well then, one of our farming-men always sleeps in that room, and with his door unlocked; so if you want aid, you have only to go there and arouse him, and he will be with your father in an instant."

"Alas, sir, and if he and I together cannot manage my poor father, if his convulsions are very strong, will you also be kind enough to come—you do seem so good, so very good!"

"Me, my poor boy? I sleep, as do all the other men-servants of the farm, in a building at the bottom end of the court-yard. But don't you be at all alarmed; Jean René is strong enough to manage a bull. Moreover, if you and he should need any one to help you, he will call up our old cook; she sleeps on the first-floor, in the room next to that of our mistress and of mademoiselle—and the old woman, who is a kind and careful soul, will, if there is need, serve as a nurse."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, my worthy gentleman. I will pray to God for you to-night, for you are very charitable to have so much pity for my poor father."

"Good night, my boy, and let us hope that you will not need any aid. You had better now make haste back to your father; he may be wanting you."

"I will run to him; good night, kind sir."

"God preserve you, poor boy!" And the worthy old labourer returned to the kitchen. Scarcely had he turned his back upon Tortillard, when the little wretch made that eminently mocking gesture, familiar to the Parisian scamps; which gesture consists in repeatedly striking the nape of the neck with the palm of the left hand, and, at each time, throwing forward the right hand quite open. With a perfectly devilish cunning, this boy had obtained, under the guise of tenderness and solicitude for his father, information most important to the success of the abominable projects of La Chouette and the Schoolmaster. He already knew that the building in which he and the Schoolmaster were lodged, was inhabited only by Madame Georges, Fleur-de-Marie, an old female cook, and one of the male labourers. When Tortillard returned to the room assigned to him and the blind man, he took good care not to approach too near him; but the Schoolmaster heard him, and growled out: "Where have you been, you little villain?"

"You are mighty curious, blind-un!"

"Oh! you shall pay very dear for all that you have made me suffer this evening, you cursed brat!" cried the Schoolmaster, rising in a fury, and groping about in search of Tortillard, guiding himself by the walls. "Now I will strangle you in right earnest, when I catch you, you young fiend—you infernal viper! I will not let you off this time!"

"Poor dear father! is he so pleased then, that he will insist upon playing at blind-man's-buff with his own darling boy?" said Tortillard, chuckling, as with the greatest ease he baffled the pursuit of the Schoolmaster, who, though impelled to the attempt by his irrepressible rage, was soon induced to give it up, and, as had been the case before, to relinquish all hope of wreaking his vengeance on the imp-like son of

Bras-Rouge. Thus compelled to endure this insolent persecution until the moment should arrive at which he could securely avenge himself, the Schoolmaster gave up all notion of present violence, and threw himself upon the bed, uttering the most frightful blasphemies.

"Poor father!" said Tortillard, "is your toothache very bad, that you swear so much? Ah! what would M. the Curé say if he could hear you? He would give you a rare penance!"

Well, well, go on!" said the brigand, in a hollow and constrained voice. "Rail at me; take advantage of my horrible misfortune—coward that you are! Oh, that is fine, noble, generous, is it not, contemptible scoundrel!"

"Oh! what a pretty notion! Generous, indeed! What's running in your head now?" said Tortillard, bursting into a loud laugh. "Excuse me, but you certainly were very particular in robbing every one right and left, before you were blinded; and as for generosity, why, I don't think you ever thought of the word till very lately."

"But I never harmed you; why then do you torment me thus?"

"In the first place, because you insulted my dear La Chouette; then, you wanted to stay here and play the fool among these innocent clod-hoppers. Perhaps you would like to commence a course of asses' milk next?"

"Miserable young wretch! if it had been possible for me to remain at this farm—which may thunder and lightning now scatter to the winds!—I would no longer have endured your devilish tricks and cruelty."

"You stop here! What a farce! Who would then be Madame la Chouette's *beast of suffering?* I, perhaps. Much obliged all the same, but I'd rather not, I thank you."

"Villanous abortion!"

"Abortion! yes, that is another reason why I agree with Aunt Chouette, that there can be nothing more amusing than to scourge you to death—you who could kill me with a blow of your fist; it is a far more agreeable treat than it would be if you were weak—an abortion like myself! Oh, you were beautifully funny at supper to-night! God of gods, what a lark I had all to myself! At every kick I gave you on the sly, rage drove the blood up into your head, and the whites of your eyes were rimmed with fiery red; they only wanted a little dab of blue in the middle, and then they would have been tri-coloured, like the cockades of the town serjeants!"

"Come, come, you love to laugh and be merry—it suits your age. I am not angry with you," said the Schoolmaster, in a tone of assumed carelessness, hoping to propitiate Tortillard; "but, instead of passing your jokes off upon me, why do you not remember what you were told to do by La Chouette, of whom you are so fond? You are to examine all the ways of the place, you know, and take impressions of the locks. Did you not hear them speak of a large sum of money that is to be here next Monday? We will come back with some of our friends, and take our share. I was a fool indeed, to think of remaining here; I should have had enough of it in a single week, of living among these wooden-headed country people, shouldn't I, boy?" said the ruffian, thinking to flatter Tortillard.

"Upon my word of honour, I should have been very much grieved," said the son of Bras Rouge, with a malicious chuckle.

"Yes, yes, there is a good hit to be made here; and even if there were no booty to be got in this house, I would return with La Chouette, to take vengeance," said the brigand, in a voice that trembled with rage and hatred; "for it is quite certain that it was my wife who excited that infernal Rodolph against me: and in blinding me, did he not say that he would put me at the mercy of every one, even of the weakest—of an old woman like La Chouette, and a young scamp of a child like you? Well, if I cannot avenge myself upon him, I will avenge myself of my wife! Yes, she shall pay for all—even though I should fire the house, and bury myself among its burning ruins! Oh! I will have—I will——"

"You will, you would like to get hold of your wife, wouldn't you, old fellow? Well now, she's within ten paces of you; that's galling, isn't it? If I liked, I could lead you to the very door of her room, that I could, for I know the room. I know it—I know it—I know it," added Tortillard, singing according to his custom.

"You know her room?" said the Schoolmaster, with a ferocious joy. "You know it!"

"Ah! you are coming round now, old cur; you'll be good presently, and sit up and beg like any other dog, when we show him a bone! Attention, old Growler!"

"You know which is my wife's room?" repeated the bandit, ferociously, and turning in the direction of Tortillard's voice.

"Yes, I know it; and the finest part of the business is, that in this whole building there is only one male labourer. I know his room—the key is in the lock on the outside; I have only to turn it, and, click! he is a close prisoner. Sit up then, old Growler!"

"Who told you this?" asked the bandit, springing up involuntarily.

"Gently, Growler! In the room beside that of your wife, sleeps an old cook; another turn of the key, and we are masters of this house, of your wife, and of the young girl in the light cloak, whom we came to carry off. Now, give us your paw, old Growler, and sit up to your master. Sit up, sir, directly!"

"You lie, you lie! how could you know all this?"

"I'm lame, but I'm no fool. Just now, I made up a tale about your having fits, and I told it to that hobbling labourer, and asked him where I should go for help, should I need it for you; then he told me that if you had an attack, I could go and rouse up the labourer and the old cook, and he showed me where they sleep—one on this floor, and the other on the first floor, in the next room to your wife—your wife—your wife!" sung Tortillard, in his monotonous drone.

After a long silence, the Schoolmaster said, in a calm tone, and with a sincere and frightful determination: "Listen to me, boy; I have had quite enough of life. Just now—well, yes, I confess it—I had a gleam of hope that now makes my actual fate all the more terrible. The prison, the galleys, the guillotine, are nothing compared to what I have endured since morning—and this I have to endure *for life!* Lead me to my wife. I have my knife with me; I will kill her. I shall afterwards be killed, but what of that? I shall be avenged, and that will console me. What I have endured is too much, oh! it is too much for me, before whom all were accustomed to tremble! Oh, boy! did you but

know what I have suffered, and am still suffering, you would pity me. Even now, my very heart is bursting; my brain whirls, and every vein seems swelling and about to break."

"I see—a cold in your head, old Beelzebub; sneezing will do you a world of good," said Tortillard, with an audible grin. "What say you to a pinch of snuff, old brickdust?"

And striking one hand noisily upon the back of the other, as if tapping the lid of a snuff-box, he sang:—

"J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière,
J'ai du bon tabac, tu n'en auras pas."

"Oh, my God, my God! they want to drive me mad!" cried the brigand, who, in reality, was now well nigh maddened by his excessive thirst of vengeance, which vainly sought to satiate itself. The plenitude of the monster's strength was only to be equalled by its impotency. He was like some famished wolf, tortured all day through the iron bars of his den by a child, and having at two paces from him, yet fully protected against his power, a victim which would at once satisfy his hunger and glut his rage. At the last taunt of Tortillard, the brigand almost entirely lost his senses. Lacking a victim, he wished to shed his own blood. For an instant, he was fully resolved to slay himself; and had he had a loaded pistol in his hand, he would not have hesitated to do so. He felt in his pocket, and drew forth a formidable dagger-knife, opened it, and raised it to stab himself. But rapid as his emotions were, they were outstripped by his reflections—by fear, and by the instinctive clinging to life. The murderer's courage failed him, and his hand fell upon his knees. Tortillard had watched all the bandit's movements with an attentive eye, and when he saw the harmless ending of such tragic preparations, he cried out with a chuckle: "How, lads—a duel! Pluck the chickens!"

The Schoolmaster, fearing lest he should lose his reason in a final and useless burst of rage, turned a deaf ear to this last insult of Tortillard, who so impertinently commented on the cowardice with which the assassin shrank from suicide. Despairing of escaping from what, with a sort of avenging fatality, he called the *cruelty* of this accursed boy, the brigand resolved to make a last attempt by appealing to the cupidity of the son of Bras-Rouge.

"Oh!" said he to him, in an almost supplicating voice, "lead me to the door of my wife's room; you shall take whatever you like from that room, and then you shall escape—you shall leave me there alone; nay, if you like, you may cry murder, and alarm the whole house against me. Let them arrest me, or kill me on the spot—I shall die avenged, at least, since I have not the courage to be my own executioner. Oh! lead me, lead me! you will find plenty of gold and jewels in her room; I tell you again, that you shall have all that you like to take from them, for yourself alone, do you hear?—for your own self alone!—only lead me to where she is."

"Oh, yes, I hear you very well. You want me to lead you to her door, then to her bed, and then you will want me to tell you where to strike, and then to guide your hand—is not that it? Yes, yes, you want me to be your *knife-handle*, you old monster! but you shall rather kill me than force me to lead you to your wife!" replied Tortillard, with an expression of mingled contempt, horror, and anger, which, for the first time in his life, gave something of seriousness to his usually impudent and weasel countenance.

"You refuse?"

The son of Bras-Rouge made no reply. With bared feet he stealthily approached the Schoolmaster, who was sitting upon the edge of the bed, and still holding his dagger-knife in his hand. With a marvellous quickness and dexterity, Tortillard snatched the weapon away, and, at a single bound, placed himself at the other end of the room.

"My knife! my knife!" cried the brigand, stretching out his arms.

"No! for you are capable of asking to see your wife in the morning, and then stabbing her—since you say you are tired of life, and are too great a coward to kill yourself."

"How he defends my wife against me!" exclaimed the bandit, whose intellect was becoming less and less clear every instant. "Is he a demon then, this little monster? Where am I? Why should he try to save her?"

"Because it suits me!" said Tortillard, whose physiognomy resumed its old mask of impudent raillery.

"Ah, ah! is that it?" cried the Schoolmaster, in a state of bewilderment. "Well, I'll fire the house! We will all burn together—all! I prefer this furnace to the other. The candle! the candle!"

"Ah, ah, ah!" cried Tortillard, bursting into a fresh fit of laughter. "If your lights were not snuffed out, and for ever, you would see that our candle has been put out for this hour past!" And the little imp involuntarily sung:—

"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu."

The Schoolmaster uttered a deep groan, extended his arms, and fell heavily upon the floor, face downwards, as if struck by apoplexy, and remained perfectly motionless.

"Ah! I'm *down* to you, old fellow!" said Tortillard; "a trick to get me into your clutches! No go, old one! When you're tired of planking it, just say so, and I—I will give you leave to get up again!"

The son of Bras-Rouge, fearful of being surprised by the Schoolmaster, sat still in his chair, with his eyes fixed upon the prostrate ruffian, whose fall, he was firmly persuaded, was only a trap to get hold of him. To pass his time the more agreeably, Tortillard now took silently and carefully from his pocket a little red silk purse, and slowly, and with looks of joyful covetousness, counted over and over again the seventeen pieces of gold which it contained. Tortillard had thus acquired his ill-gotten store:—"It may be remembered that, when Madame d'Harville was so nearly surprised by the marquis, on the occasion of her fatal appointment with the commandant, Rodolph gave her a purse, and told her to go to the fifth-story of the house, on the plea of befriending the Morels. Madame d'Harville rapidly ascended the stairs, holding the purse in her hand, when Tortillard, coming from the apartment of the charlatan, espied the purse, pretended to stumble, and snatched it from the lady's hand. Madame d'Harville, bewildered, almost maddened with terror, as she heard the footsteps of her husband, hastened up to the fifth-story of the house without the power, and even without the thought of complaining of the audacious robbery of the young cripple. After having counted and recounted his gold, Tortillard cast his eyes towards the Schoolmaster, who was still stretched

upon the floor. Disquieted for a moment, he listened attentively, and, hearing the robber breathe freely and regularly, he thought that he was merely prolonging some meditated trick against him."

An accident had saved the life of the Schoolmaster; his fall having caused a copious bleeding from the nose, had undoubtedly preserved him from congestion of the brain. He had now fallen into a sort of feverish stupor, that was half sleep, half delirium; and while he lay in that state, he had this wild and fearful dream.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DREAM.

This was the Schoolmaster's dream:—

He again saw Rodolph in the house in the Allée des Veuves. The saloon in which the brigand suffered his dreadful punishment, had undergone no change. Rodolph was seated behind a table, upon which lay the papers of the Schoolmaster, and the little *Saint Esprit* of *lapis*, which he had given to La Chouette. The countenance of Rodolph was grave and sad. On his right, the negro David stood silent and impassible; on his left was the Chourineur, gazing with a bewildered mien upon what was passing. The Schoolmaster, in this hideous dream, was no longer blind, but he saw through the medium of a limpid blood, which filled up the cavities of his eyes: all objects presented themselves to him with a blood-red hue. As the birds of prey hang motionless in the upper air above their victims, whom they fascinate before they devour, so a monstrous owl, whose head presented the hideous aspect of the one-eyed woman, hung motionless over the Schoolmaster, and mocked his every gesture, keeping fixed on him her one, round, green, glaring eye. This continued gaze pressed upon the bosom of the brigand, with an awful and tremendous weight. As one who has become accustomed to darkness gradually distinguishes objects which at first were invisible, the Schoolmaster now discovered an enormous lake of blood, which separated him from the table at which Rodolph was seated. Then his inflexible judge, as well as the Chourineur and the negro doctor, gradually assumed colossal proportions; these veritable phantoms rose to the very friezes of the ceiling, which became higher in proportion. The lake of blood was smooth and unruffled as a red mirror: in it the Schoolmaster saw his own hideous countenance reflected. But soon this reflection was effaced by the sudden tumult of the swelling waves. From their agitated surface rose, like the fetid exhalation of a swamp, a livid vapour of that violet colour peculiar to the lips of a corpse. But in proportion as this vapour rose, rose, rose, so did Rodolph, David, and the Chourineur still increase their proportions, and still overtopped this fearful cloud. In this fantastic mirage, the Schoolmaster first saw a little old bald-headed man; he was dressed in a brown frock coat, and his eyes were concealed by a green silk shade. He was busied in a mean and dilapidated room, in counting piles of gold coin, by the light of a lamp. Through the window lighted by a pale moon, which silvered the crests of some lofty trees that sighed and waved in the night-breeze, the Schoolmaster saw himself on the outside of the window—his horrible countenance pressed close to the glass, in his eager observation of the tenant of the room. He followed with his flashing eyes the smallest movements of the little old man; then he broke a pane of glass, opened the casement, sprung at a single bound upon his victim, and buried his long, sharp knife between his shoulders. The movement was so rapid, the blow so quick and sure, that the dead body of the old man remained seated in the chair.

The murderer tried to withdraw his weapon from the corpse—he could not! He redoubled his efforts—they were vain. Then he would fain have abandoned his knife—impossible! The hand of the assassin was as immovably fixed to the handle of the knife, as its blade was to the body of the victim. Then the murderer heard the clanking of spurs and clashing of sabres, in a neighbouring apartment To escape, at any price, he endeavoured to carry with him the old man's corpse, from which he could withdraw neither his knife nor his hand. But even in this he could not succeed. The light, frail carcass weighed him down like some enormous mass of lead. Notwithstanding the Herculean strength and breadth of his shoulders, notwithstanding all the desperation of his efforts, the Schoolmaster could not lift the enormous weight of that small body.

The rattling of swords and spurs, and the measured but rapid fall of footsteps, came nearer and nearer. The key turned in the lock—the door opened. The vision suddenly disappeared.

Then the enormous owl clapped its wings as it shrieked:—"THAT IS THE RICH OLD MAN OF THE RUE DU ROULE—YOUR VIRGIN EFFORT AS AN ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!"

Obscured for a moment, that vapour which covered the lake of blood, soon resumed its transparency, and presented another spectre.

Day seemed to be just dawning through a dark and heavy fog. A man, in the attire of a cattle-dealer, lay dead upon a bank of the high road. The trampled ground, the indented and up-torn grass, showed that the victim had made a desperate resistance. The man had five bleeding wounds on his chest. He was lifeless, and yet did not cease to whistle for his dogs, and to call aloud for 'Help, help!' But he whistled for his dogs, and called for aid, not through his lips, but through his five wide, deep, and ghastly wounds, whose gaping edges moved as the lips move of one who speaks. These five cries, these five whistles, simultaneously issuing from the corpse, by the *mouth* of his death-wounds, were fearful to hear.

At this moment, the enormous owl again flapped her heavy wings, and mocked the five funereal groans of the victim, by five bursts of ghastly laughter, ferocious and strange as the laugh of the frantic; and then the owl cried: "THE CATTLE-DEALER OF POISSY!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!"

Prolonged subterranean echoes at first repeated the malevolent, sinister laughter of the owl; then they seemed gradually to sink and die away in the bowels of the earth.

At this sound, two large dogs, as black as ebony, with eyes glaring like burning coals, began to run rapidly around—around—around the Schoolmaster, barking furiously. They almost touched him, and yet their bark appeared as distant as if borne on the wind of the morning.

By degrees, the spectres faded away like dispersing mists, and became lost in the livid vapour which continued to ascend.

A new exhalation now arose, and spread itself upon the surface of the lake of blood. It was a sort of transparent, greenish mist, and resembled the vertical section of a canal filled with green water. At first, the bed of the canal seemed to be covered with a thick slime, composed of innumerable reptiles, ordinarily invisible to the eye, but which now, magnified as if seen through a microscope, took the most monstrous aspects, and the most enormous proportions relatively to their actual size. It was no longer mud, but a compact, busy, grovelling, living mass of unclean and disgusting creatures—a vast, struggling, and inextricable living entanglement, which swarmed and multiplied in such compact and serried pressure, that scarcely did an imperceptible undulation stir the level of this vase, or rather bed of this shoal of foul animalculæ. Above floated, slowly and sluggishly, a thick, dead, muddy water, which carried along in its lazy course all the filth vomited out by the drains and sewers of a great city, among which, rolling as they floated, were numerous dead animals. Suddenly the Schoolmaster heard the sound of a body which fell heavily into this turbid and loathsome stream. In its sudden reflux, the water even splashed into his face. Through a crowd of water-bubbles which rose to the surface of the canal, he saw the body of a woman, sinking rapidly as she struggled—struggled. Then he saw himself and La Chouette precipitately rushing from the canal Saint-Martin, and carrying with them a box enveloped in black cloth; and yet he still witnessed all the varying agonies of the victim that he and La Chouette had thrown into the canal. After this first immersion, he saw the woman rise to the surface of the water, and violently throw about her arms, like one who, not knowing how to swim, vainly strove to save herself. Then he heard a great cry—a long, loud, piercing cry, like one in the last extremity—which was ended by heavy and gurgling sounds of involuntary choking, and, for the second time, the woman sank beneath the unclean water.

The owl, which still brooded motionless over the dread scene, now imitated the convulsive and hoarse gurgling of the drowning woman, as it had imitated the groans of the cattle-dealer. In the midst of bursts of death-like, harrowing laughter, the owl repeated: "*Glou, glou, glou!*"

Subterranean echoes replied to these sounds.

Submerged for the second time, the drowning woman, in the agony of suffocation, made an involuntary attempt to breathe; but, instead of air, it was water—the black and filthy water of the canal, which she inhaled. Then her head fell back, her convulsed features became swollen and livid, her neck blue and tumefied, her arms stiffened, and, in a last terrible convulsion, the drowning victim moved her feet, which were resting on the vase. Then she was surrounded by a mass of blackish soil, which arose with and around her to the surface of the water. Scarcely had the choked woman breathed out her last sigh, when she was already covered with myriads upon myriads of microscopic reptiles—the voracious and horrible vermin of the mud. For an instant, the corpse floated and still oscillated a little; then it sank slowly and horizontally, the feet lower than the head, and began to be borne away by the sluggish under-current of the canal. From time to time, the corpse rolled over and over, and its face was turned towards the Schoolmaster. Then the spectre stared at him with its two great eyes—fixed, glassy, and opaque—the livid mouth open. The Schoolmaster seemed to be far away from the drowned victim, and yet she murmured in his ear: "*Glou, glou, glou!*" accompanying those appalling utterances with the singular noise which is made by a submerged bottle when filling itself.

The owl repeated the "*Glou, glou, glou,*" of the victim, clapping her wings, and shrieking: "THE WOMAN OF THE CANAL SAINT-MARTIN!—ASSASSIN! ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!"

The vision of the drowned woman disappeared. The lake of blood, across which the Schoolmaster still saw Rodolph, became of a bronzed black; then it reddened, and speedily became changed into a liquid furnace of molten metal. Then this burning lake rose, rose, rose towards the sky, like an immense waterspout. There was now a fiery horizon, like iron at a white heat. This boundless horizon at once dazzled and scorched the eyes of the Schoolmaster, who, fascinated, fastened to the spot, could neither move away nor withdraw his gaze. Then, in the depths of this burning furnace, the fierce reflection of which seemed to consume him, he saw, slowly passing and repassing, black and gigantic spectres of his victims.

"THE MAGIC LANTERN OF REMORSE!—REMORSE!—REMORSE!" shrieked the owl, flapping its hideous wings and uttering a laugh of mockery.

Notwithstanding the almost intolerable anguish caused to him by that incessant contemplation, the Schoolmaster was still unable to withdraw his gaze from the spectres that moved slowly across that burning and dazzling sheet of lurid flame. Then a horrible sensation stole over him. Passing through all the degrees of a nameless torture, by dint of gazing upon that burning and blasting mass of fiery vapour, he felt his eyeballs and pupils—which had now replaced the blood which formerly filled his eye-sockets—become hot, burning, smoking, boiling beneath the intensity of that glowing furnace, and at last became calcined in their cavities, as they would have been in two crucibles of red-hot iron. By a frightful faculty, after having *seen* as well as felt the successive transformation of his eyeballs into calcined ashes, he fell into the shadows and dense darkness of his actual blindness.

But now, suddenly, his intolerable agonies were assuaged as if by enchantment. An aromatic air, of the most delicious coolness, passed over the still burning cavities of his eyes. This air was a soft and soothing commingling of the spring odours that are exhaled from the wild flowers of the fields and hedge-rows bathed in dew. The Schoolmaster now heard around him a gentle sound, like that of the light breeze playing among the foliage, or that of a spring of living water which softly murmurs over its bed of mossy stones. Thousands of birds warbled from time to time the most melodious strains. When they ceased, infantine voices of an angelic purity sang strange and unknown words—*winged* words, so to speak—which the Schoolmaster, with a mysterious thrill, heard ascending to the skies. A feeling of moral health, of a softness and languor utterly undefinable, gradually seized upon him. It is an expansion of the heart, a ravishment of the mind, a radiancy of the soul, of which the most intense and intoxicating physical feeling can impart no idea. He felt himself gently floating in a luminous and ethereal sphere; he seemed to be raised to an immeasurable height.

* * *

[The Schoolmaster carrying off Fleur-de-Marie.]

After having for a few moments tasted of this nameless and indescribable felicity, he found himself suddenly plunged again into the dark abyss of his accustomed thoughts. He still dreamed, still had visions; but he was now no more than the muzzled miscreant—blaspheming and cursing himself in the bursts of his impotent fury. He heard a voice, sonorous and solemn; it was the voice of Rodolph. The Schoolmaster shuddered with terror: he had a vague consciousness that he was dreaming; but so formidable was the terror with which Rodolph inspired him, that he made ineffectual efforts to rouse himself, and escape from this new vision. The voice spoke, and the guilty wretch listened.

The accent of Rodolph was not angry; it was full of sadness and compassion. "Poor wretch," said he to the Schoolmaster, "the hour of your repentance has not yet arrived; God alone knows when it will come. The punishment of your crimes is even yet incomplete. You have suffered, but you have not expiated. Destiny still pursues the work of justice. Your accomplices have become your tormentors; a woman and a child govern—subdue—torture you. In inflicting upon you a chastisement terrible as your own crimes, I said to you—remember my words—I said to you: '*You have criminally abused your great bodily strength; I will paralyse that strength. The strongest have trembled before you; henceforth you shall tremble before the weakest.*' You have quitted the obscure retreat in which you might have lived to repentance and to expiation. You were afraid of solitude and of silence. You sought to drown remembrance by new crimes. Just now, in a frightful and sanguinary delirium, you wished to kill your wife. She is here, beneath the same roof with you. She sleeps without defence, and without suspicion. You have your formidable knife, and

the chamber of your wife is within a few paces of you. Nothing prevents you from reaching her; nothing can withdraw her from your power—nothing except your own powerlessness! The dream you have had, and in which you are still bound, might be of vast instruction to you—might even yet save you. The mysterious images of this vision have a profound meaning. The lake of blood in which your victim appeared to you, is the blood that you have shed; the lava which replaced it is the devouring remorse which ought to consume you, in order that God, taking pity upon your protracted tortures, may at length call you to him, and let you taste the ineffable delights of pardon. But this will not be. No, no!—these warnings will be useless. Far from repenting of the past, your daily regret, expressed in horrible blasphemies, will be lavished upon the time when you committed your horrible crimes. Alas! from this continual strife between your sanguinary desires and the impossibility of gratifying them, between your habits of oppression and the necessity of submitting yourself to beings as weak as they are cruel, there will result to you a fate so frightful, so horrible!—Oh! poor, unhappy wretch!"

The voice of Rodolph trembled, and for a moment he was silent, as though emotion and sorrow prevented him from proceeding. The Schoolmaster's hair bristled on his brow. What then could be this fate, so horrible, that it excited even the commiseration of his executioner?

"The fate which awaits you is so awful," resumed Rodolph, "that if God, in his inexorable and all-powerful vengeance, willed that you should, in your own person, expiate the crimes of all men, he would devise no more frightful punishment. Woe, woe, misery to you!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster uttered a piercing shriek, and awakened with a wild start from this horrible dream.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER.

NINE o'clock sounded from the clock of the farm of Bouqueval, when Madame Georges softly entered the chamber of Fleur-de-Marie. The sleep of the young girl was so light, that she awakened almost on the instant. A bright winter sun darted its rays through the blinds and chintz window-curtains, the pink linings of which cast on the pale, mild countenance of La Goualeuse, the hue which alone was wanting to her perfect beauty.

"Well, my dear child," said Madame Georges, as she seated herself upon the bed, and kissed the fair brow of the young girl, "how are you this morning?"

"Better, much better, madame, I thank you."

"Where you not awakened very early this morning?"

"No, madame."

"I am very glad of that. The unfortunate blind man and his son, to whom we gave a bed here last night, wished to leave the farm at daybreak; and I was afraid that the noise made in opening the doors for them might have awakened you."

"Poor creatures! why did they go away so early?"

"I do not know. Yesterday evening, when I left you somewhat calmed, I went down into the kitchen to see them; but they had both gone to bed, being much fatigued. Father Chatelain told me that the father seems to be not quite right in his head, and that all our people were touched and delighted with the tender cares lavished upon the unfortunate man by his son. But hear me, Marie: you must not risk taking cold after your attack of fever last night; therefore, I beg you will keep yourself very quiet all day, and not leave the parlour."

"Pardon me, madame, but I promised to go this evening, at five o'clock, to M. the Curé, at the parsonage."

"It will be very imprudent. I am quite sure that you have passed a bad night—your eyes look very heavy."

"Yes, I have had such frightful dreams again. In my sleep, I again saw the woman who tormented me so much when I was a child, and I awoke with a start of terror. It is a ridiculous weakness, and I am really ashamed of it."

"This weakness afflicts me, because it causes you suffering, my poor little girl," said Madame Georges, in tones of tender interest, seeing that the eyes of La Goualeuse filled with tears.

Marie threw her arms round the neck of her adopted mother, and hid her face in her bosom.

"Come, come, Marie, what ails you?—you terrify me!"

At this moment, Claudine entered, after having knocked at the door.

"What do you want, Claudine?" said Madame Georges.

"Pierre, madame, has just arrived from Arnouville, in Madame Dubreuil's cabriolet, and he has brought you this letter, which he says is of immediate importance."

Madame Georges took the letter, opened it, and read aloud, as follows:—

"'My dear Madame Georges,—You will greatly oblige me, and probably be able to release me from a serious embarrassment, if you will favour me with your company at the farm, without delay. Pierre will drive you over here, and return with you after dinner. I really am so confused, that I hardly know what I am about. M. Dubreuil is at Pontoise, about the sale of his wool, and I have therefore recourse to you and Marie in my perplexity. Clara sends her love to her 'little sister,' and impatiently expects her arrival. Endeavour to come to breakfast at eleven o'clock.

"'Your very sincere friend,

"'F. DUBREUIL.'"

"What can it be about?" said Madame Georges to Marie. "Happily, the tone of Madame Dubreuil's letter is not calculated to cause alarm."

"Shall I accompany you, madame?" said Marie.

"Perhaps it will scarcely be prudent to do so, for it is extremely cold. But, after all," continued Madame Georges, "it will divert you; and if you wrap yourself up well, the little journey will perhaps be favourable to you."

"But, madame, M. the Curé will expect me at the parsonage at five o'clock."

"Right; we will be back before five, I promise you."

"Oh, thank you, madame; I shall be delighted to see Mademoiselle Clara again."

"What, again!" said Madame Georges, in a

tone of gentle reproach. "*Mademoiselle* Clara? Your friend, when she addresses you, does not speak so distantly as that, Marie."

"No, madame," replied Marie, casting down her eyes; "but, then, I—I——"

"Indeed, Marie, you are very cruel thus needlessly to torment yourself. Have you so soon forgotten my reproaches just now, for the same fault. Come, come, dress yourself as quickly as you can, and take care to wrap yourself up very warm. We have yet time to reach Arnouville by eleven o'clock."

Then, leaving the room with Claudine, Madame Georges said to her: "Let Pierre wait; we shall be ready in a few minutes."

Half an hour after this conversation, Madame Georges and Fleur-de-Marie stepped into one of those large, roomy cabriolets which are used by the wealthy farmers in the neighbourhood of Paris; and the powerful horse, driven by Pierre, was soon rapidly drawing them along the grassy road leading from Bouqueval to Arnouville. The vast buildings and the numerous dependencies of the farm cultivated by M. Dubreuil, showed the importance of this magnificent property, bestowed as a marriage portion on Mademoiselle Cesarine de Noirmont, on her union with M. the Duke de Lucenay.

The noisy cracking of Pierre's whip announced to Madame Dubreuil the arrival of Madame Georges and Fleur-de-Marie, who, on alighting from the vehicle, were most joyously received by Clara and her mother. Madame Dubreuil was about fifty years of age, and her physiognomy was affable and mild; the features of her daughter—a pretty brunette, with blue eyes and fresh and rosy cheeks—breathed candour and kindness. To her great surprise, as Clara hastened to embrace her, the Goualeuse perceived that the kind-hearted girl had laid aside her more fashionable attire, and was now habited as a simple country maiden.

"What, Clara! are you also *disguised* in country attire?" said Madame Georges, as she embraced the young girl.

"Oh! you must know that she will in all things imitate her sister Marie," said Madame Dubreuil; "she gave me no rest until she also had her cloth boddice and stuff petticoat, and all the rest, like your Marie. But, my dear Madame Georges, we must forget all about these caprices of our little girls," continued Madame Dubreuil, with a deep sigh; "come with me, and let me tell you what a perplexity I am in."

Following Madame Georges and her mother to the sitting-room, Clara led the Goualeuse in thither, gave her the best place by the fireside, pressed her hands to assure herself that they were not cold, embraced her again and again, and playfully whispered that she was a very naughty little sister, indeed, for not sooner paying her a visit.

Remembering the conversation that had passed between poor Goualeuse and the curé, the reader wille asily imagine the mingled happiness, fear, and humility, with which the unfortunate girl received these tender marks of affection from her friend.

"Well now, my dear Madame Dubreuil, what has happened to you?" said Madame Georges; "pray tell me in what I can be of service to you."

"Oh, in many things; but I'll explain all to you. I do not think you are aware of it, but this farm is the private property of Madame the Duchess de Lucenay; it is with her that we have to settle all business, without any reference to the duke or his steward."

"In fact, I was ignorant of that."

"You'll see presently, why I now tell it to you. Well, we consider ourselves as the tenants of Madame de Lucenay, and always make our payments either to herself or to Madame Simon, her principal *femme de chambre*. Madame the Duchess is so kind, so very kind, though she has rather an impetuous manner, that it is quite a pleasure to have to do business with her. Dubreuil and I would go through fire and water to oblige her; and no wonder either, for I knew her when she was quite a little girl, when she came here once a year with her father, the late Prince de Noirmont. Well, lately she asked us for six months' rent in advance. Forty thousand francs is a sum not found in a minute, as the saying is; but happily we had that amount in reserve as the wedding portion of our Clara; and the very day after the request was made, Madame the Duchess had the money in bright, shining louis. These great ladies want so many luxuries, and spend so much in matters that you and I have no idea of. However, it is only during the last twelvemonth that Madame the Duchess has wished for her payments beforehand; formerly she seemed never in want of money, but now matters are very different."

"Still, my dear Madame Dubreuil, I do not perceive how I can be of any service to you."

"I shall come to that directly; I have told you all this in order to enable you to understand what confidence Madame the Duchess places in us, to say nothing of her having been, at the age of twelve or thirteen, Clara's godmother, her noble father standing as the other sponsor; ever since which time, Madame the Duchess has been exceedingly kind to her godchild. But now for the pith of my story. Yesterday evening, I received, by express, this letter from the duchess:—

"'It is absolutely necessary, my dear Madame Dubreuil, that the little pavilion in the orchard be made fit for occupation by to-morrow evening. Have all necessary furniture put into it, such as carpets, curtains, &c. &c. In a word, let nothing be wanting to make it as *comfortable* as possible.'

"Do you mark—*comfortable*, Madame Georges! and the word is underlined, too!" said Madame Dubreuil, looking at her friend with an air at once embarrassed and meditative. Then she continued to read:—

"'Have fires burning day and night, to dispel any possible damp; for it is a long time since the rooms were inhabited. I wish you to treat the person who will occupy the pavilion, as you would treat *me*. You will receive by the hands of the new visitant, a letter from me, explaining what I expect from your obliging zeal and well-known attachment. I reckon entirely on you, and feel assured that I may safely depend on your fidelity and desire to serve me. Adieu, my dear Madame Dubreuil; embrace my pretty goddaughter, and believe in my kindest feelings towards her and yourself.

"'NOIRMONT DE LUCENAY.

"'P. S. The person in question will arrive the day after to-morrow, about dusk. Above all things, I beg of you, do not forget to make the pavilion as *comfortable* as you possibly can.'"

"*Comfortable* again, you see, and underlined as before!" said Madame Dubreuil, as she returned the letter of the duchess to her pocket.

"Well, nothing can be more simple than that," replied Madame Georges.

"How, nothing more simple? Did you not hear, then? Madame the Duchess wishes the pavilion to be rendered as *comfortable* as possible. It is on that account that I have begged you to come to-day. Clara and I have well nigh bothered our senses endeavouring to make out what that word *comfortable* means, but we could not manage it. Yet Clara has been at boarding-school at Villiers le Bel, and brought away I know not how many prizes for history and geography; however, she could make no more of the outlandish word than I could! I suppose it is only some fine term which the gentry use among themselves. Still, you must see how embarrassing it is to me; Madame the Duchess especially wishes the pavilion to be made *comfortable;* she underlines the word, she repeats it twice, and we do not even know what it means!"

"Heaven be praised!" said Madame Georges, "I can explain this great mystery. *Comfortable*, in the present instance, means a convenient, well-arranged, well-closed, and well-warmed apartment; in a word, an apartment in which nothing is wanting of the necessary, and even of the superfluous."

"Ah, now I understand what the word *comfortable* means; but then the explanation only increases my embarrassment."

"How is that?"

"Madame the Duchess speaks of carpets, furniture, and many other things; but we have no carpets here, our furniture is of the most homely kind; and then, in fact, I do not know whether the person whom we have to expect is a gentleman or a lady, and everything must be prepared by to-morrow evening. What am I to do? There is nothing to be got here. In truth, Madame Georges, it is enough to turn one's brain!"

"But, mother," said Clara, "suppose you were to take the furniture out of my apartment; I could pass a few days at Bouqueval with Marie, until you could refurnish my room."

"Your room, your room, my child? What nonsense! Do you fancy the simple furniture of your room can be equal to what Madame the Duchess means by the word *comfortable?* Dear, oh, dear! where can people find such hard words—and when they have found them, why do they use them?"

"The pavilion is commonly uninhabited then, I presume?" asked Madame Georges.

"Oh, yes; it is that little white house which stands by itself at the bottom of the orchard. The late prince had it built for Madame the Duchess when she was a girl; and when she came to the farm with her father she used to occupy it. It contains three pretty rooms, and at the end of its garden there is a Swiss dairy, which Madame the Duchess, when a child, used to divert herself by feigning to manage. Since her marriage, we have seen her at the farm only twice, and on each occasion she passed several hours in the pavilion. The first time—it is full six years ago—she came on horseback with——" Then, as though the presence of Clara and Fleur-de-Marie prevented her from completing the sentence, she abruptly said: "But, here am I, talking and gossiping, just as if that would help me out of my difficulty. Pray assist me, my dear Madame Georges, help me, I beg of you!"

"Well, let us see. How is the pavilion furnished at the present moment?"

"Scarcely at all. In the principal room there is straw matting on the floor, a rush couch, chairs of the same material, and a table. That's all, and between that and being *comfortable*, you will say that there is a good way."

"Well, I will tell you what I would do were I in your place. It is now eleven o'clock; I would immediatetely send off some person on whom you can depend ——"

"Our *overlooker**—there cannot be a more active, intelligent man."

"Exactly the sort of messenger. Well, in about two hours he can be in Paris. Let him go to any upholsterer in the Chaussée d'Antin, and give him a list which I will draw up for you, as soon as I have seen the pavilion. Then, the upholsterer must be told that, no matter at what cost ——"

"Oh, cost is of no consequence, so that the duchess be but satisfied."

"Well, the upholsterer must be told, then, that, at whatever cost, everything set down upon the list must be sent here this evening, or in the course of the night; and that with the goods he must send down three or four of his men to put everything in its place as quickly as possible."

"They can come by the Gonesse coach, which leaves Paris at eight o'clock in the evening."

"Then, as nothing is wanted but just the carrying of the goods, nailing down the carpets, and putting up the curtains, all may quite easily be done before to-morrow morning."

"Ah, my kind Madame Georges, from what embarrassment you have relieved me! You are my saviour. I should never have thought of a word about this! Now, will you make me out a list of all that is needed to make the pavilion ——"

"*Comfortable?* Yes, certainly."

"Bless me, but there is still a difficulty! We do not know whether our expected visitor is a gentleman or a lady. The letter of the duchess merely says, *a person*. How perplexing, isn't it?"

"Then provide as if for a lady, my dear Madame Dubreuil; and if your visitor is a gentleman, he will only find himself all the better accommodated."

"You are right, as usual—very right."

A farm-servant now announced that the repast was ready.

"We'll breakfast presently," said Madame Georges; "but first I will go and make out the list of what is necessary for the pavilion, and have the rooms measured, so that the curtains and carpets will come down ready to be fixed on the instant."

"Thank you, thank you; and I will set our *overlooker* about this business at once."

"Madame," continued the servant, speaking to her mistress, "the new dairy-woman from Stains has come; her goods are in a little cart, drawn by a donkey, which does not seem at all fatigued, for the poor thing's luggage appears but trifling."

"Poor woman!" said Madame Dubreuil, in a kind tone.

"What and who is this woman?" asked Madame Georges.

"A poor creature from Stains, who lately

* A kind of foreman employed on most of the large farms in the neighbourhood of Paris.

kept four cows, and used to go to Paris every morning to sell her milk. Her husband was a farrier, and, wanting to buy some iron, one day he went to Paris with his wife, whom he agreed to join, after making his purchase, at the corner of a street, where she was accustomed to sell her milk. Unfortunately, as it has turned out, the poor woman had established herself in a very bad part of Paris, and when her husband returned to her, he found her in the midst of some drunken fellows, who had been brutal enough to overturn all her milk into the gutter. The poor farrier endeavoured to bring them to reason, but that made the matter worse. They ill-treated him — he defended himself, and in the course of the fray he received a stab which laid him dead upon the spot."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Madame Georges; "and was the assassin arrested?"

"Unfortunately, he was not. In the confusion he contrived to escape, but the poor widow is quite sure she can recognize him whenever she may meet him again, as she had often noticed him in company with other low fellows of that neighbourhood; but, hitherto, all search after him has been vain. In short, since the death of her husband, the poor woman, to pay various debts, has been obliged to sell her cows and some little patches of land that she possessed. The bailiff of the chateau of Stains has recommended her to me as an excellent creature, who is as honest as she is unfortunate, having three children to provide for, of whom the eldest is not twelve years old; so, having just now a place vacant, exactly suited for her, I have engaged her, and she has come to take up her abode here."

"I am not astonished at such goodness on your part, my dear Madame Dubreuil."

"Clara," resumed Madame Dubreuil, "will you go and instal the poor woman in her new lodging, while I go and instruct our *overlooker* as to the necessity of our immediate departure for Paris?"

"Yes, mother, and Marie will go with me."

"Oh, certainly. How could you be separated?" said the mother, smiling.

"And I, in the mean time," said Madame Georges, sitting down at the table, "will make out my list, so that no time will be lost; for Marie and I must return to Bouqueval by four o'clock."

"At four!" said Madame Dubreuil; "and why so soon?"

"Yes, for Marie has to be at the parsonage by five o'clock."

"Oh, if it concerns the good Abbé Laporte, I have not a word to say; the appointment is sacred. I will give the necessary orders. As for these two children, no doubt they have many, many things to say to each other, and we must give them as much time as we can."

"Well then, my dear Madame Dubreuil, we will leave here at three o'clock."

"Very well, the cabriolet shall be ready for you. But what a lucky thought it was of mine to send for you to come to my aid! But come, Clara! — Marie! why are you not off, my children?"

As Madame Georges sat herself down to her writing, Madame Dubreuil left the room in one direction, and the two young girls in the other, in company with the servant who had announced the arrival of the poor woman from Stains.

"Where is that poor woman?" asked Clara.

"She is in the court-yard with her little donkey cart and her children, mademoiselle."

"You will see her, Marie; you will see the poor thing," said Clara, taking the arm of La Goualeuse. "Oh, she is so pale, and looks so sad in her deep, widow's mourning. The last time that she came to see mother, she quite made my heart ache. She cried bitterly as she spoke of her husband, and then, suddenly, her tears stopped, and she burst into such a tempest of fury against the cowardly assassin! She actually frightened me, so fierce did she look then; but, after all, her resentment is very natural. Oh! how unfortunate some people are, are they not, Marie?"

"Oh, yes, alas! some people are indeed unfortunate!" said Marie, sighing, and speaking in an absent tone. "Oh, yes, you are right, mademoiselle."

"Come!" cried Clara, stamping her little foot impatiently, "why do you call me *mademoiselle*? Are you offended with me?"

"How is it possible that *I* could be offended with *you*!"

"Well then, if you are not, why do you call me *mademoiselle*? You know my mother and Madame Georges have scolded you for it already. All the worse for you if I get you scolded again, naughty sister that you are!"

"Forgive me, Clara! I was thinking of something else, and did not know what I was saying."

"Thinking of something else!—and yet you have not seen me for a whole week!" said Clara. "Thinking of something else! that would be bad enough, but that is not it. See you, Marie, I shall at last think that you are too proud to own me for your friend."

Fleur-de-Marie at this moment became very pale, and made no reply. At sight of her, a woman in the deep, first mourning of a widow, uttered a loud cry of horror and rage. This woman was the very person from whom La Goualeuse used every morning to buy her milk, while she lived with the ogress at the *tapis-franc*.

The scene that we are now about to describe, took place in one of the yards of the farm, in presence of the labourers, both male and female, who had just left their work to get their mid-day meal. Under a shed stood a little donkey and cart, the latter containing the few household moveables of the widow. A little boy of about twelve years of age, aided by two still younger children, was just beginning to unload the cart. The milkwoman herself, completely dressed in black, appeared to be about forty years of age. Her countenance was coarse, masculine, and resolute; and her eyes were inflamed, as with recent weeping. On perceiving Fleur-de-Marie, she at first uttered a cry of alarm; but quickly grief, indignation, and rage, contracted and convulsed her features. With a rapid movement she sprang towards La Goualeuse, seized her brutally by the arm, and said, as she pointed the attention of the labourers to the terrified girl: "Here is a wretch who knows the murderer of my husband! I have seen her talking to the cowardly villain twenty times! When I sold milk at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, at Paris, she used to buy a half-pennyworth of me every morning. She must know well enough the villain who stabbed my poor husband; for such loose characters as she are intimate with all the thieves and mur-

derers. Oh, you young wretch, you shan't escape me, depend on it!" cried the milkwoman, exasperated almost to madness, by her unfounded suspicions; and she seized the other arm of Marie, who, trembling and bewildered, endeavoured to escape. Clara was at first so stupefied by this sudden and unexpected attack, that she could not utter a word; but, seeing the woman grow more and more violent, she at length said to her: "Are you mad, then? Has your grief distracted you, that you make such a mistake as this?"

"Mistake!" cried the woman, in a tone of bitter irony; "a mistake! Oh, no, no, I make no mistake in the matter! See her, how pale and guilty she looks upon it already, the wretch! How her teeth chatter! Justice will force her to speak, I'll warrant. Do you hear, you baggage, you shall go with me before the magistrate! Oh, resisting is of no use; I have a rare strong fist, you'll find: and rather than you shall not see the magistrate, I'll carry you there, every step of the way."

"You insolent woman!" said Clara, now quite exasperated, "leave these premises directly! How dare you thus to insult my friend—my sister!"

"Your sister, mademoiselle! Come now, that's a good joke; it is you who have lost your senses. Your sister!—what, a girl out of the streets, whom I have seen with some of the lowest of the low, in one of the vilest parts of the City?"

At these words the labourers loudly murmured against Marie, naturally taking part with the milkwoman, who was of their own class, and whose misfortune interested them. The widow's three children, hearing their mother raise her voice, ran to her, and clung round her, crying, and wondering what was the matter. The appearance of these poor little creatures, thus attired in mourning, redoubled the sympathy which was inspired by the widow, and proportionately augmented the indignation of the labourers against Fleur-de-Marie; while Clara, frightened at these threatening demonstrations of violence, said to the farm-people, in a firm tone: "Take this woman away directly; I tell you that grief has maddened her. Marie, dear Marie! forgive her; the poor creature knows not what she says."

La Gousleuse, pale, terror-stricken, hanging down her head to avoid the gaze of all, remained silent, crushed, inert, and no longer offered the slightest resistance to the rude grasp of the powerful milkwoman. Clara, attributing this depression to the fright which such a scene was well calculated to inspire in the heart of her gentle and timid friend, again addressed the labourers, saying: "Did you not hear me? I desire you to take this woman away. As she persists in her shameful conduct, her insolence shall be punished by her being deprived of the place which my mother promised her; nor shall she ever again set foot on this farm."

Not one of the labourers stirred to obey Clara; on the contrary, one of the boldest of the party exclaimed: "But, mademoiselle, if she is a girl of the streets, and if she knows the assassin of the poor woman's husband, she ought to be taken before the magistrate, and made to give an account of all she knows about the matter."

"I tell you," said Clara, indignantly, addressing the milkwoman, "you shall not remain here unless you instantly ask pardon of Mademoiselle Marie, for the gross insults of which you have been guilty towards her."

"You order me off the premises then, mademoiselle, do you? So be it," said the widow, bitterly. "Come, my poor children, load the cart again; we must endeavour to earn our bread somewhere else. God, as he has promised, will provide for us. But, at all events, we will take with us this abandoned wretch, who shall be forced to denounce to the magistrate, if she will not to us, the murderer of your poor father; for she who has been the associate of some of the vilest ruffians who infest Paris, no doubt knows him well enough. And you, mademoiselle, because you are rich," added she, in the most insulting tone, addressing herself to Clara, "because you have friends among such creatures as this, ought you therefore to be hard upon poor people who do not belong to her class?"

"True," said one of the labourers; "she ought not—the milkwomaan is quite right.

"Poor woman!"

"She only wants her right."

"Ought she to be so easily satisfied, when her husband has been murdered!"

"One thing is, she cannot be prevented from doing all in her power to discover the wretches who committed the crime."

"It is an injustice to send her away."

"Is it any fault of hers, that Mademoiselle Clara has for her friend, a girl of the town—an associate of thieves?"

"An honest mother of a family ought not to be turned out of doors with her helpless children on that account."

These murmurs were becoming more and more distinctly threatening, when Clara suddenly exclaimed: "God be praised, here comes my mother!"

In fact, Madame Dubreuil, returning from the pavilion in the orchard, at this moment crossed the court-yard.

"Well, Clara! well, Marie!" said she, as she approached, "are you ready for your breakfast? Come, my children, for it is very late, and I am sure you are hungry."

"Mother," cried Clara, pointing to the widow, "protect my sister from the insults and violence of this woman; pray send her away. Oh! if you only knew all the insolent things that she has had the audacity to say to Marie!"

"Impossible! Can she have dared ——?"

"Yes, mother; only look at my poor little sister, how she trembles! I declare she can scarcely stand. Ah! it is a shame that such a scene should take place here. Pardon us, Marie, I entreat you to pardon us, for, indeed, it is no fault of ours!"

"But what does all this mean?" inquired Madame Dubreuil, throwing around a disturbed and uneasy look, after having observed the despairing anguish of the Gousleuse.

"Oh! madame will act justly, that's quite certain," murmured the labourers.

"Yes, now Madame Dubreuil has come, it is thou, wretch, that we shall put out of doors," said the widow to Fleur-de-Marie.

"Is it true then," said Madame Dubreuil, addressing the milkwoman, "that you dare to speak in that manner to the friend of my daughter? Is this the way you show your gratitude for my kindness? Will you leave that young person alone?"

"I respect you, madame, and I am very grateful for your goodness," said the woman, letting go the young girl's arm; "but before you blame me, and drive my poor children away, just question this wretched girl yourself: I fancy that, bad as she is, she will hardly have the face to deny that I know her, and that she knows me, too!"

"Good heaven, Marie!" do you hear what this woman says?" asked Madame Dubreuil, in great surprise.

"Are you or are you not called La Goualeuse?" asked the milkwoman.

"Yes," said the unfortunate girl, in a low tone, and not venturing to lift up her eyes towards Madame Dubreuil—"yes, I am so called."

"There, see you!" cried the enraged labourers, "she confesses, she confesses!"

"She confesses! but what—what does she confess?" asked Madame Dubreuil, half-frightened by the assent of Marie.

"Give her time to speak," said the milkwoman, "and she will also confess that she lately lived in an infamous house in the City, in the Rue aux Fèves, where I used to sell her a half-penny-worth of milk every morning; and she will confess too, that I have often seen her speaking to the fellow who murdered my poor husband. Oh, she is well acquainted with him, I am quite sure. He is a pale young man, who is always smoking, and who wears a blouse, a cap, and has very long hair. She must know his name. Is this true, or is it not? Answer me, wretch!" cried the enraged milkwoman.

"I may have spoken to the murderer of your husband, for, unfortunately, there is more than one assassin in the City," said Marie, in a timid and broken tone; but "I do not know of whom you speak."

"What—what does she say?" cried Madame Dubreuil, in alarm; "she has spoken to assassins?"

"Oh! creatures such as she is have no other acquaintances," replied the widow.

"At first, wholly stupefied by so singular a revelation, confirmed, however, by Fleur-de-Marie's own admission, Madame Dubreuil seemed at a loss to comprehend it all; but quickly the truth flashed across her mind, and recoiling from the unfortunate girl with horror and disgust, she suddenly and hastily drew her daughter away, just as she was about to sustain the poor, sinking Goualeuse, and exclaimed: "Oh, what an abomination! Clara, take care—do not go near the abandoned creature! How came Madame Georges to receive such a strumpet into her house! How can she have dared to present such a wretch to me, and suffer my daughter—this is disgraceful, indeed! I can scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses! But no—no, Madame Georges is quite incapable of such unworthy conduct. She is as much deceived as we have been. If it were not so, oh! her conduct would, indeed, be infamous."

Clara, alarmed and in despair at this cruel scene, almost fancied that she must be dreaming. Her candid and pure mind was unable to comprehend the terrible charges brought against her friend; her heart ached, and her eyes filled with tears, as she saw La Goualeuse standing silent and crushed, like some criminal in the presence of her judge.

"Come, come, my dear child, let us go," said Madame Dubreuil. Then turning to Fleur-de-Marie, the irritated lady added: "As for you, unworthy creature, the Almighty will not fail to punish you for your infamous hypocrisy. To dare to allow an innocent young girl like my daughter, virtuous as she is, to call you her friend, her sister! You! the very scum and offscouring of the vilest wretches in the world! What hardihood, what abominable assurance, to dare to thrust yourself upon honest people, when, no doubt, you ought to be in prison with your vile companions!"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the labourers, she must go to prison! No doubt she knows the murderer!"

"Perhaps she may be their accomplice."

"You see now," said the enraged widow, doubling her fist, and shaking it in the face of poor Goualeuse, "my words have come to pass: did I not tell you there was justice in heaven?"

"As for you, my good woman," said Madame Dubreuil to the milkwoman, "so far from sending you away, I will reward the services that you have done me and my daughter by the exposure of this wretch."

"That's right, that's right! There now, our mistress is just," cried the labourers.

"Come, Clara," said her mother, "Madame Georges must explain her share in this sad business, or I will never see her again while I live; for if she has not also been deceived, her conduct towards us is of the worst description."

"But, mother, only see the sad state of poor Marie!"

"Let her die with shame, if she likes; so much the better if she would do so! Despise her. I would not for the world have you remain another instant where she is; she is one of those creatures to whom a young girl like you cannot even speak without being dishonoured."

"My dear mother," said Clara, gently resisting the endeavours of her mother to draw her away, "I know not what all this may mean; Marie may be guilty, since you say she is, but see how she suffers, and is ready to faint. Let her be ever so guilty, at least have pity upon her in her present distress!"

"Oh, Mademoiselle Clara, how kind you are to forgive and to care for me! Oh! believe me, it was indeed in spite of myself, that I deceived you, and often have I reproached myself for it!" said Fleur-de-Marie, casting on her young protectress a look of ineffable gratitude.

"But, mother, have you then no pity?" exclaimed Clara, in the most piteous tones.

"Pity—pity for her! Mark me, did I not consider it to be the duty of Madame Georges instantly to rid us of this pest, I would have her spurned from the place," replied Madame Dubreuil, sternly; and as she drew her daughter away from the spot, Clara turned round and said to Fleur-de-Marie: "Marie, my sister, I do not know of what they accuse you, but I am quite sure that you are innocent, and I love you still."

"Silence, child, silence!" said Madame Dubreuil, placing her hand upon her daughter's lips. "Fortunately, every one here can bear witness that you have not remained alone with that wretch for an instant. You can all speak to that, can you not, my friends?" added she, speaking to the people about her.

"Yes, yes, madame," said a labourer, "we are all witnesses that Mademoiselle Clara has not remained a moment with that girl, who no doubt is a thief, as she is so intimate with assassins."

Madame Dubreuil led Clara away. La Goua-

leuse remained alone in the centre of the group that had closed menacingly around her. Notwithstanding the reproaches with which Madame Dubreuil had overwhelmed her, even her presence, and still more that of the compassionate Clara, had served somewhat to allay the fears of Fleur-de-Marie as to the probable termination of the scene; but after the departure of both mother and daughter, seeing herself left entirely to the mercy of the enraged crowd, her strength failed her, and she was obliged to lean for support upon the parapet of the deep drinking-place that was constructed for the cattle of the farm.

Nothing could be more touching than the attitude of this unfortunate girl, nor anything more menacing than the language and bearing of the people who surrounded her. Seated, or rather supporting herself, almost upright upon the stone coping, her head bowed down, and hidden in her small, white hands, her throat and bosom veiled by the long ends of the red Indian kerchief which surrounded her little round cap, La Goualeuse, perfectly motionless, presented the most touching picture of grief and resignation.

At a little distance from Fleur-de-Marie stood the widow of the murdered man. Triumphant in her vindictive rage, and exasperated the more against her by the denunciations of Madame Dubreuil, she pointed out the wretched object of her wrath to the labourers and her children, with every demonstration of hatred and contempt. The farm-people, standing around in a circle, did not attempt to disguise the hostile sentiments by which they were animated; their coarse, rude countenances expressed at once indignation, rage, and a sort of brutal and insulting raillery. The women were even more furious than the men. Neither did the touching beauty of La Goualeuse by any means tend to allay their fury. Moreover, neither men nor women could pardon Fleur-de-Marie for having till then been treated as an equal by their superiors. And some of the labourers at this farm now present having been unable, from want of sufficient recommendations, to obtain the much envied employment at the farm of Bouqueval, they bore a secret grudge to Madame Georges, and determined to avail themselves of the opportunity now before them to wreak their spiteful feelings and ill-will upon one whom she was known to love and protect. The first impulses of uncultivated minds are always in the extreme, very excellent or very detestable; but they become dangerous when the multitude fancies its brutalities to be authorised by the real or apparent wrong-doings of those who are the objects of its anger or aversion.

Although the greater number of the labourers now collected together had probably not any possible right to display such virtuous ferocity against the accused girl, they seemed to feel and act as though contaminated by her very presence; their modesty revolted at the recollection of the class to which the unfortunate had belonged, and they shuddered to be near one who, moreover, had confessed that she had often conversed with assassins. What more then was wanted to urge on these ignorant and prejudiced country-people, encouraged as they had been by the example of Madame Dubreuil?

"We must take her before the mayor!" cried one.

"Yes, yes; and if she will not walk we must drag her."

"And for her to dare to dress like one of us honest country girls!" said an awkward, ill-looking wench.

"Well, I'm sure," added another female, "with her sanctified looks, one would think she would get to heaven without priest or confession."

"Why she has even had the impudence to go to mass!"

"The impudent creature! why not have taken the sacrament at once?"

"Oh, yes, and she must needs associate with our betters!"

"As though we poor people were not good enough for such creatures as she!"

"Happily, every dog has his day!"

"Oh, I'll make you speak, and tell who it was that murdered my poor husband!" vociferated the enraged widow. "You are all of the same gang; indeed I am not even sure that I did not see you among them on that very day. Come, come, snivelling here is of no use, now that folks know who you are. Show us your face, it is well enough to look at!" And the widow brutally pulled down both the hands with which the poor girl was concealing her pale, grief-worn features, bathed in tears.

La Goualeuse, sinking under a sense of shame, and terrified at thus finding herself at the mercy of these enraged people, joined her hands, and turning towards the milkwoman her meek and supplicating looks, she said, in a gentle voice: "Indeed, indeed, madame, for the last two months I have been living at the farm of Bouqueval, therefore I cannot have witnessed the horrible misfortune you speak of, and ——"

The timid tones of Marie were now drowned by the furious outcries of the mob.

"Take her before the mayor; let her explain herself to him!"

"Come, march on, my fine lady!"

And the threatening group closed upon the poor girl, who, crossing her hands upon her bosom, mechanically looked around her, as if in search of help.

"Oh!" cried the milkwoman, "it is no use for you to look about you; Mademoiselle Clara is not here to defend you now; you shall not escape, I promise you."

"Alas, madame," said the trembling girl, "I seek not to escape from you; I will answer all questions put to me, since that may be useful to you. But, what harm have I ever done to all these persons who thus threaten and surround me?"

"You have done this to us: you have had the impudence to associate with our superiors, which we, who are a thousand times better than you, are not allowed to do—that's what you have done to us."

"Yes, and why did you want to get this poor woman and her children driven away?" cried another.

"It was not I, but Mademoiselle Clara, who wished ——"

"That is not true," interrupted the labourer who had last spoken;" you did not so much as speak a favourable word for her; you were willing to deprive her and her children of bread!"

"No, no, she did not even speak a good word for the poor things, which would have cost her nothing!" said another.

"Oh, she is a regular bad one!"

"A poor widow, too, with three helpless children!"

"If I did not ask pardon for her," said Fleur-

de-Marie, "it was because I had not strength to speak a word."

"You could find strength enough to speak to assassins!"

As it usually happens, in cases of popular emotion, these country-people, more ignorant than wicked, actually intoxicated themselves with their own passionate expressions, and became fiercer and fiercer at every fresh threat or insult directed against their unhappy victim.

The menacing throng drew closer and closer around Fleur-de-Marie, gesticulating as they railed; while the widow especially seemed to have lost all control over herself. Separated from the deep water-pit only by the parapet upon which she was leaning, she trembled at the idea of their pushing her backward into the water; and extending towards them her clasped hands, she exclaimed in a supplicating tone: "But, good people, what do you want with me? For pity's sake, do not ill-treat me!"

And as the milkwoman, with fierce and violent gesticulation, kept approaching nearer and nearer, thrusting her fist almost into the face of Fleur-de-Marie, the poor girl, shrinking back in the utmost alarm, cried in the most piteous tones: "I implore you, do not press so closely on me, or you will have me into the water."

These ill-timed words of Marie awakened a cruel idea in the rude minds of these people. Thinking only of one of those practical jokes which, however amusing to those who suggest them, are sometimes far from terminating pleasantly, one of the noisiest and most violent of the labourers called out: "A ducking! a ducking! let us give her a ducking!"

"Yes, yes, to the water, the water—in with her!" was repeated with bursts of laughter and frantic applause.

"That's the best thing for her; a good ducking will not kill her!"

"That'll teach her not to mix with honest folks again."

"Yes, yes, into the water with her—fling her over!"

"Luckily, the ice was broken this morning."

"Yes, yes, we'll give the girl of the streets something by which to remember the honest people of the farm of Arnouville!"

On hearing these inhuman cries and barbarous jokes, and on seeing the exasperation that was expressed upon all the brutally excited countenances of those who approached to carry their threat into execution, Fleur-de-Marie deemed herself lost. To her first thrill of alarm there almost immediately succeeded a sort of gloomy satisfaction. The future appeared to her in such dark colours, that she mentally returned thanks to heaven for abridging her sufferings; she uttered not a word of complaint, but fell upon her knees, piously crossed her arms upon her bosom, closed her eyes, and awaited her doom in silent prayer. The labourers, surprised at the attitude and at the mute resignation of Marie, hesitated for a moment to pursue their savage purpose; but, taunted on their folly and irresolution by the female part of the assemblage, they recommenced their shouts and ribaldry, as though to give themselves the courage to adopt their evil design. Two of the most furious among them were on the very point of seizing Marie, when an agitated and thrilling voice exclaimed: "Stop! desist, I command you!"

At the same moment Madame Georges, who had forced herself a passage through the crowd, reached the still kneeling Marie, raised her in her arms, and cried: "Stand up, my child, stand up, my beloved daughter; we should kneel only before God!"

The expression and attitude of Madame Georges were so full of courageous firmness, that the crowd drew back in silence. Indignation coloured her usually pale features, and casting on the labourers a stern look, she said to them, in a loud and threatening voice: "Wretches! are you not ashamed to proceed to such brutal violence with this unfortunate child?"

"She is a ——"

"She is my daughter!" cried Madame Georges, with severity, and interrupting the man who was about to speak. "M. the Abbé Laporte, whom every one reveres and blesses, loves and protects her, and those whom he esteems ought to be respected by every one."

These simple words imposed silence upon the crowd. The curé of Bouqueval was looked upon in that district almost as a saint; and many present knew how much the good old man interested himself in La Goualeuse. However, some confused murmurs were still raised; Madame Georges fully comprehended their meaning, and said: "If even this unfortunate girl were the last and worst of creatures, and abandoned by all the world, your conduct towards her would be none the less odious! For what would you punish her, and by what authority? Can you call yourselves men, who would exert your strength against one, poor, feeble, unresisting female! Surely it was an act of cowardice all to unite against a defenceless girl. Come, Marie, come, my poor child, let us return home—there at least you are known and valued."

Madame Georges took the arm of Fleur-de-Marie; and the labourers, confused, and conscious of the brutality of their conduct, respectfully made way for them. The widow alone remained; and advancing resolutely to Madame Georges, she said to her: "I don't care what you say, but this girl shall not go away until she has given her evidence before the mayor, on the subject of the murder of my poor husband."

"My good friend," said Madame Georges, restraining her indignation, "my daughter has no evidence to give here; if at any future time justice require her testimony, let her be called for, and I will accompany her. Until then, no one has a right to question her."

"But, madame, I tell you ——"

Madame Georges, interrupting the widow, said to her, sternly: "Scarcely can your severe misfortune excuse your conduct. You will some day bitterly regret the violence you have so imprudently excited. Mademoiselle Marie lives with me at the farm of Bouqueval; make that known to the magistrate who receives your deposition, and we shall await his orders."

The widow, unable to argue against words so wisely spoken, seated herself on the parapet of the drinking-place, and wept bitterly as she embraced her children. Almost immediately after this scene, Pierre brought the cabriolet, into which Madame Georges and Fleur-de-Marie stepped to return to Bouqueval.

As they passed before the farm-house of Arnouville, La Goualeuse perceived Clara, who was weeping bitterly as she stood half concealed behind a partly closed shutter; and she waved her handkerchief to Fleur-de-Marie, in token of adieu.

"Ah, madame! what shame for me, and what vexation to you," said Fleur-de-Marie to her adopted mother, when they were once more alone in the little parlour of the farm of Bouqueval. "No doubt you are for ever at variance with Madame Dubreuil, and all this is on my account! Oh, my presentiments! God has justly punished me for having deceived that lady and her daughter. I am the cause of discord between you and your friends!"

"My friend is an excellent woman, my dear child, but she has but a poor, weak head; still, she has altogether as good a heart, and I have no doubt that to-morrow she will regret her foolish conduct of to-day."

"Alas, madame, do not for a moment think that I am willing to justify her by accusing you; God forbid! but it is possible that your kindness to me has closed your eyes to ——. Put yourself in the place of Madame Dubreuil. Learning that the companion of her beloved daughter was—what I was—say, can we blame her maternal indignation?"

Unfortunately, Madame Georges could not sincerely oppose a word in reply to this question of Fleur-de-Marie, who continued with increased excitement: "This disgraceful scene will soon be known and talked about all over the neighbourhood. It is not for myself that I fear; but who knows whether the reputation of Mademoiselle Clara may not be spotted, because she kindly called me her friend, her sister? I ought to have obeyed my first impulse, and resisted the inclination which drew me so strangely towards Mademoiselle Dubreuil; at the risk of inspiring her with dislike, I ought to have avoided the friendship which she offered me. But I forgot the distance which separates me from her, and thus I am punished, oh! most cruelly punished! for perhaps I have done an irreparable injury to a kind and virtuous girl."

"My child," said Madame Georges, after a few moments' reflection, "you are wrong to reproach yourself thus. It is true that your former life was culpable—yes, very culpable; but is it nothing to have merited, by your penitence, the protection and favour of the venerable curé? Was it not under his auspices and mine, that you were presented to Madame Dubreuil? Did not your own good qualities alone inspire the attachment which she avowed to you? Did not she herself first bid you call Clara your sister? And then, as I just now said to her—for I could not and would not conceal anything—could I, certain as I was of your repentance, divulge the past, and thus render your re-establishment in virtue and respectability by so much the more difficult, perhaps impossible, by throwing you, in despair of being again received and recognised by the good and virtuous, back upon the scorn and derision of those who, equally guilty, equally unfortunate as you have been, would not perhaps, as you have, preserved the secret instincts of honour and virtue? The revelation made by that widow is mischievous, fatal; but ought I, even had I foreseen its possibility, to sacrifice the repose of your whole future life to an improbable casualty?"

"Ah, madame! what proves that my position is for ever false and miserable, is, that out of your affection for me, you have found it necessary to hide the past, while Clara's mother is entitled to despise me for that past—to despise me as every one henceforth will despise me; for the scene at the farm of Arnouville will be quickly spread abroad, and all will be known. Oh, I shall die of shame! I shall never more be able to meet the looks of any human being!"

"Not even mine, my child?" said Madame Georges, bursting into tears, and opening her arms to Marie. "In my heart you will never find towards you but the tenderness and devotion of a mother. Courage then, Marie; support yourself with the consciousness of your sincere repentance. Here you are surrounded only by friends; let this house be your world. We will anticipate the exposure that you so much dread. Our good abbé shall assemble the farm-people, who are already so much attached to you, and he shall tell them the truth as to the past. Trust me, my child, his word has so much authority, that this disclosure will only increase the interest that is already felt for you."

"I believe you, madame, and I resign myself. Yesterday, in our conversation, M. the Curé predicted to me that I should be called upon to make most painful expiations; they have already commenced, and I ought not to be astonished. He also told me that my sufferings will one day be accounted unto me, as some atonement for the sins I have committed: I would fain hope that such will be the case; and sustained under my trials by him, by you, and by that hope, I will not, I ought not to complain."

"You will go to him presently, and never can his advice be more salutary and valuable to you. It is already half-past four o'clock, so you had better prepare yourself for your visit to the parsonage, my child. I am going to write a letter, which I shall send by express to M. Rodolph, to make him acquainted with what has taken place at the farm of Arnouville. That done, I will meet you at the house of our good abbé, for it is important that we should all three have some conversation together."

Shortly after, La Goualeuse left the farm on her way to the parsonage, by the ravine-road, where La Chouette, the Sbhoolmaster, and Tortillard, had agreed to meet on that evening.

As may have been perceived, from her conversations with Madame Georges and the curé of Bouqueval, Fleur-de-Marie had so nobly profited by the precepts and examples of her benefactors, so completely imbibed their principles, that she despaired more and more as she reflected upon the degradation of her past life. As her mind expanded, so did her noble instincts disclose themselves, and fructify in the atmosphere of honour and purity amidst which she now breathed. Had she possessed a less lofty intelligence, a less exquisite sensibility, or a less lively imagination, Fleur-de-Marie would have been easily condoled; but unfortunately, not a single day passed in which she did not recal, and almost live over again, with an agony of horror and disgust, the disgraceful miseries of her past existence.

Let us but picture to ourselves a mere child of sixteen years of age, having the consciousness of her purity and candour, hurled by some irresistible power into the tavern of the ogress, and helplessly subjected to the domination of that wretch! Such, for the mind of Fleur-de-Marie, was the reaction of the past upon the present. Let us still further display the species of retrospective feeling, or rather the moral rebound

under which La Goualeuse suffered so cruelly, by saying that she regretted, more frequently than she had dared to avow to the good abbé, that she had not perished in the mire of her past degradation.

However little any one may possess of reflection or the experience of life, what we are about to say can scarcely, we think, be mistaken for a mere paradox. Fleur-de-Marie was especially worthy of pity and of interest, not only because her affection had never been aroused, but because her senses had always remained frozen and slumbering. Is it not astonishing that this unfortunate girl, thrown, at sixteen years of age, among the horde of ferocious and demoralised beings that infested the City, had experienced only horror and disgust, and had come forth morally pure from that sink of corruption?

CHAPTER II.

THE RAVINE-ROAD.

The sun had sunk below the horizon; the vast plains were deserted and silent. As Fleur-de-Marie approached the entrance of the hollow way which she had to cross in order to reach the parsonage, she saw, issuing from the ravine, a little lame boy, dressed in a greyish blouse and a blue cap; he appeared to be crying, and the instant he saw La Goualeuse, he ran towards her.

"Oh, my kind lady, have pity on me, if you please!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands with a look of supplication.

"What do you want—what is the matter with you, my poor little boy?" asked La Goualeuse, in a tone of interest.

"Alas! my kind lady, my poor grandmother, who is old, has fallen down yonder, as she was descending the ravine, and hurt herself very much. I am afraid that her leg is broken, and I am too weak to lift her up. Oh dear, what shall I do unless you, my good lady, will assist me? My poor old grandmother will, perhaps, die!"

La Goualeuse, touched by the grief of the little cripple, replied: "I am not very strong myself, child, but perhaps I can help you to raise your grandmother. Lead me to her quickly. I live at yonder farm; and if the poor old woman cannot walk there with our help, I will go back and send some of the men to carry her."

"Oh, my kind lady, I am sure the good God will bless you for it. It is close by here—a few steps from the ravine-road; it was in descending the bank that she fell."

"You don't belong to this part of the country?" said La Goualeuse, as she followed Tortillard, who, no doubt, has already been recognised by the reader.

"No, my kind lady, we come from Rouen."

"And whither are you going?"

"To a good curé, who lives on yonder hill," said the son of Bras-Rouge, to increase the confidence of La Goualeuse.

"To the Abbé Laporte's, perhaps?"

"Yes, my kind lady—to the Abbé Laporte's. My poor grandmother knows him very, very well."

"What a strange meeting! I am myself going directly to this house," replied Marie, entering further and further into the ravine-road.

"Grandmother, I'm coming! I'm coming! Be patient; I am bringing a kind young lady to help you!" shouted Tortillard, to prepare La Chouette and the Schoolmaster to seize upon their victim.

"It is not far from here then, that your grandmother has fallen?" said La Goualeuse.

"No, my kind lady, only just behind that large tree where the road bends, at about twenty paces from here."

"Suddenly Tortillard stopped. The noise of a horse galloping was heard in the silence of the plain.

"All is lost again!" said Tortillard to himself.

The road made a very sudden turn at a few yards from the spot which La Goualeuse and Tortillard had now reached. A horseman appeared at this turning, and, as he reached La Goualeuse, reined up. At the same time the trot of another horse was heard, and in a few moments a servant rode up, dressed in a brown coat with silver buttons, white doeskin breeches, and top-boots. A narrow leather belt, fastened to his back, held the macintosh of his master. The master was simply dressed in a thick, brown coat, and light-blue pantaloons, and he rode a thoroughbred horse of singular beauty; notwithstanding the long distance that it had galloped, this noble animal had not turned a hair, and showed not the least sign of moisture on the lustrous gloss of its coat. The horse of the groom, which stood motionless several paces in the rear of his master, was also a well-bred, perfect animal. In the dark and handsome-faced gentleman, Tortillard recognised the Vicomte de Saint-Remy, who was supposed to be the lover of Madame the Duchess de Lucenay.

"My pretty maid," said the viscount to La Goualeuse, whose beauty struck him with admiration, "will you be so obliging as to direct me to the village of Arnouville?"

Marie, casting down her eyes beneath the bold and admiring look of the young man, replied: "On quitting the ravine-road, sir, you will take the first turning on the right; that road will lead you to an avenue of cherry-trees, which goes directly into Arnouville."

"A thousand thanks, my pretty lass; you give me somewhat clearer directions than an old woman who is lying at the foot of a tree, a few paces round the corner of the road; I could get nothing from her but groans."

"My poor grandmother!" said Tortillard, in a whining tone.

"Let me beg one word more," said M. de Saint-Remy, addressing La Goualeuse; "can you tell me if I can easily find the farm of M. Dubreuil, at Arnouville?"

La Goualeuse could not repress a slight shudder at these words, which vividly recalled to her mind the painful scene of that morning. She replied: "The buildings of the farm stand beside the avenue which leads into Arnouville."

"Thank you again, my pretty maid," said M. de Saint-Remy, and he galloped off, followed by his groom.

The handsome features of the viscount had been animated in their expression as he spoke to Marie; but, when alone again, they became darkened and contracted by a deep, painful anxiety. Fleur-de-Marie, remembering what she had heard of the unknown personage for whom the pavilion at Arnouville was being prepared in such haste, by the orders of Madame de Lucenay, felt no doubt that it was for this handsome young cavalier. The sound of the horses' feet, as they galloped along, was heard for some time on the frozen ground; gradually it grew fainter and fainter, and soon again all was hushed in silence.

Tortillard breathed again. Wishing at once to encourage and inform his accomplices, one of whom, the Schoolmaster, was hidden from the sight of the horseman and his groom, the son of Bras-Rouge now called out: "Grandmother, here I am, with the good young lady, who is come to help you!"

"Quick, quick, my boy! The gentleman on horseback has caused us to lose some minutes!" said the Goualeuse, hastening forward to reach the turning into the hollow road.

Scarcely had she entered it, when La Chouette, who lay hidden there, exclaimed: "Now then, *fourline!*"

Then, springing upon the Goualeuse, the one-eyed hag grasped her throat with one hand, and placed the other over her mouth; while Tortillard, throwing himself at the young girl's feet, clung round her so as to prevent her from stirring a step.

All this took place so rapidly, that the Chouette had no time to examine the features of the Goualeuse; but, during the few moments it required for the Schoolmaster to emerge from his hiding-place, to grope his way along with his cloak, the woman recognised her old victim.

"La Pegriotte!" almost yelled the hag, in mingled rapture and wonder. Then, in a tone of ferocious delight, she added: "What! is it you again? Ah! the *soul-baker* (the devil) has sent you! It is your luck, then, to fall into my clutches. I have vitriol in the coach! This time I'll spoil your pretty face, for you make me sick with that virgin look of yours! Now, my man—take care that she does not bite you, and hold her fast while we wrap her up."

With his two powerful hands, the Schoolmaster seized the Goualeuse, and, before she could utter a single cry, La Chouette had thrown the cloak over her head, and bound it tightly around her. "Now, *fourline*, take up your bundle!" said the hag. "Ah, ah! you will not find it so heavy as the *negress*—(the parcel covered with black oil-cloth) of the woman we drowned in the canal Saint-Martin, eh, my man?" And, as the brigand shuddered at these words, which reminded him of his frightful dream of the previous night, the hag resumed: "Ah! what ails you, *fourline?*—you seem to be shivering. Ever since the morning, your teeth have every now and then began to chatter, as if you had the ague; and then you look up into the air, as if you were trying to see something!"

"The great impostor—he *watches* the flies!" said Tortillard.

"Come, quick!—forward with you, my man! Up with my Pegriotte! That's the way!" said the Chouette, as she saw the ruffian lift Fleur-de-Marie in his arms, as he would carry a sleeping child. "Quick, to the coach!—quick!"

"But who will lead me?" asked the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice, and securing his light and flexible burthen in his Herculean arms.

"The old wisehead thinks of everything!" said La Chouette.

Then, taking off her shawl, she untied a red pocket-handkerchief from around her skinny and yellow neck, and twisting it into its length, said to the Schoolmaster: "Open your *grub-trap*, and take the end of this *wipe* between your *ivories*. Hold tight! Tortillard will take the other end in his hand, and all you've got to do is to follow him. The good blind man should have a good dog! Here, brat!"

The cripple cut a caper, and made a low, odd sort of barking; then, taking the other end of the handkerchief in his hand, he thus led the Schoolmaster, whilst La Chouette hurried forward to prepare Barbillon for their coming. We have not attempted to depict the terror of Fleur-de-Marie, when she found herself in the power of La Chouette and the Schoolmaster.

Some few minutes afterwards, La Goualeuse was placed in the coach, which Barbillon drove; although it was night, the blinds were carefully closed, and the three accomplices went, with their almost expiring victim, towards the plain of Saint-Denis, where Thomas Seyton awaited them.

CHAPTER III.

CLEMENCE D'HARVILLE.

THE reader will be good enough to excuse us, for abandoning one of our heroines in a situation so critical, the result of which we shall state hereafter.

It will be remembered that Rodolph had saved Madame d'Harville from an imminent danger, caused by the jealousy of Sarah, who had sent information to the Marquis d'Harville, of the rendezvous which his wife had so imprudently granted to M. Charles Robert. Deeply moved by that scene, the prince returned home on leaving the house in the Rue du Temple, postponing to the following day his intended visit to Mademoiselle Rigolette and the family of the unfortunate artisan of whom we have spoken, believing them to be placed beyond immediate want, thanks to the money he had given Madame d'Harville to convey to them, in order that her pretended charitable visit to the house might assume a more convincing appearance in the eyes of her husband. Unfortunately, Rodolph was ignorant of Tortillard's possession of the purse, although the reader is acquainted with the manner in which the little cripple managed to effect the audacious theft.

About four o'clock, the prince received the following letter, which was brought by an old woman, who left instantly, without waiting for any answer:—

"My lord,—I owe you more than life, and I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to you this very day; to-morrow, perhaps, shame would close my lips. If your royal highness will honour me with a call this evening, you will end the day as you began it—by a generous action.

"D'ORBIGNY-D'HARVILLE.

"P.S. Do not trouble yourself to reply to this note, my lord; I shall be at home during the whole evening."

Rodolph, glad as he was to have been able to render Madame d'Harville so eminent a service, regretted, nevertheless, the forced intimacy thus suddenly established between him and the marquise. Incapable of betraying the friendship of M. d'Harville, yet deeply struck by the grace, intellect, and beauty of Clémence, Rodolph, after being assiduously attendant on her for a month after his arrival in Paris, had perceived that he was dangerously attracted towards her, and therefore he almost entirely denied himself the pleasure of seeing her. It was with emotion, too, that he remembered the conversation which he had overheard in the winter-garden of the ambassadress, between Tom and Sarah, when the latter, in accounting to her brother for her hatred

and jealousy of Clémence, had rightly affirmed that Madame d'Harville still entertained, almost unconsciously, a serious affection for Rodolph. Sarah was too acute, too sagacious, too learned in the mysteries of the human heart, to be unaware that Clémence — believing herself neglected, perhaps disdained, by a man who had made so deep an impression upon her—had, in her vexation, and in compliance with the importunities of a perfidious friend, allowed herself, almost by surprise, to be interested in the imaginary woes of M. Charles Robert, without completely forgetting Rodolph. Other women, indeed, faithful to the memory of the man first distinguished by them, would have remained wholly insensible to the melancholy looks of the commandant. Clémence d'Harville, then, was doubly guilty, although she had yielded only to the seduction of woe, and although a lively sense of conjugal duty, joined, perhaps, to remembrance of the prince, had preserved her from the commission of an irreparable crime.

Rodolph, as he thought of his approaching interview with Madame d'Harville, was a prey to strange contradictions. Fully resolved to resist the infatuation which drew him towards her, he now thought himself fortunate in being able to cast off his love for her, by dint of reproaching her taste with the choice of such a person as M. Charles Robert; and, on the contrary, he bitterly regretted the dispersion of the flattering illusion with which he had surrounded her.

* * *

The marquise, also, on her part, looked forward to this interview with much anxiety; the two feelings which predominated in her, being a most painful confusion when she remembered the generous interference of Rodolph, and a profound aversion when she thought of M. Charles Robert. There were several reasons to justify this aversion, nay almost hatred. A woman will risk her peace and honour for a man; but she will never forgive him for having placed her in a ridiculous or humiliating position. Madame d'Harville felt her cheeks flush with shame, and her pulse beat with indignation, when she called to mind her exposure to the sarcasms and insults of Madame Pipelet. Nor was this all. Warned by Rodolph of the danger in which she was placed, Clémence had hastened towards the fifth story of the house, and in doing so, owing to the position of the staircase, she had perceived M. Charles Robert, dressed in his gaudy *robe de chambre*, at the moment when, hearing the light footsteps of the woman whom he so impatiently expected, he half opened his door, with a smiling, confident, and triumphant look. The air of insolent familiarity expressed by his insignificant costume, told the marquise at a glance how much she had been deceived about this man. Led away by the goodness of her heart, and by the imprudent generosity of her disposition, she had granted him this meeting, not from love, but only from commiseration, and in order to console him for the ridiculous part which the abominable vulgarity of the Duke de Lucenay had compelled M. Robert to play before her at the embassy. Language cannot describe the disgust and annoyance with which Madame d'Harville witnessed the vulgar bearing and milksop attire of the commandant!

The timepiece in the small *salon* which Madame d'Harville usually occupied, struck nine. Milliners and tavern-keepers have so exorbitantly abused the style of Louis XV. and the *Renaissance*, that the marquise, possessing great good taste, had banished from her own apartments that sort of luxuriousness of furniture, now become so vulgar, and confined it to that part of the hôtel devoted to grand receptions. Nothing could be more elegant nor more distinguished than the fitting-up of the apartment in which the marquise awaited Rodolph. The colour of the walls, as well as the curtains—which, devoid of valances or draperies, were of Indian texture—was bright straw-colour, upon which were embroidered, in dead silk of the same shade, the most charming and capricious variety of arabesques. Double curtains of Alençon lace entirely concealed the windows. The rosewood doors were set off by silver-gilt mouldings, very delicately chased, surrounding in every panel an oval medallion of Sèvres china, nearly a foot in diameter, and representing birds and flowers of a most exquisite finish and brilliancy. The frieze of the white marble chimney-piece, and its two Caryatides, of antique and exquisite beauty, were the work of the masterly chisel of Marochetti, that eminent artist having consented to sculpture this delightful little *chef-d'œuvre*, no doubt from remembering that Benvenuto Cellini did not disdain to bestow his genius upon ewers and armour. Two candelabras and two candlesticks of vermeil, exquisitely worked by Gouttière, stood on each side of the timepiece, formed of a square block of *lapis lazuli*, raised upon a pedestal of oriental jasper, and surmounted by a large and magnificent cupola of enamelled gold, studded with pearls and rubies, belonging to the best period of the Florentine *Renaissance*. Many excellent pictures of the Venetian school, and of middling dimensions, completed this *tout ensemble* of elegance and refinement.

Thanks to a most charming innovation, this handsome room was lighted up by a lamp, whose polished crystal globe was half hid amidst a mass of natural flowers contained in a large and deep bason of Japan, beautifully painted in azure, purple, and gold, suspended from the ceiling like a lustre, by three chains of vermeil, around which twined the green stalks of several climbing plants; while some of these flexible and flower-laden stems hung down over the edges of the bason, forming a graceful fringe of cool, fresh verdure upon the porcelain enamelled with purple, azure, and gold. We have enlarged upon these details, trifling as they may seem, in order to convey some idea of the natural good taste of Madame d'Harville (almost always symtomatic of an elevated mind), and because there are certain mysterious griefs, which seem still more poignant when they are borne amidst and contrasted with those appearances which, in the general estimation, render life enviable and happy.

Buried in the downy luxury of a large armchair, totally covered, like the rest of the furniture, with a bright, straw-coloured silk, sat Clémence d'Harville. Her hair was arranged in the most simple style. She wore a high dress of black velvet, which displayed with admirable effect the beautiful workmanship of a deep collar and cuffs of English lace, and prevented the blackness of the velvet from contrasting too suddenly with the dazzling whiteness of her throat and hands.

In proportion as the moment for her interview with Rodolph approached, the emotion of the marquise increased. At length, however, her confusion gave place to more resolute thoughts,

and, after mature reflection, she determined upon confiding to Rodolph a great and very painful secret, in the hope that her frankness would perhaps win back the esteem that she now valued so much. Revived by gratitude, her first partiality for Rodolph had returned with new strength; for one of those secret whispers which rarely deceive the loving heart, told her that it was not mere chance that had brought the prince so opportunely to her aid; and that, in avoiding her for some months previously, he had yielded to a sentiment the very opposite of indifference. A vague instinct also awakened in the mind of Clémence some doubts of the sincerity of Sarah's affection.

Whilst meditating upon these things, a *valet de chambre*, after discreetly tapping at the door, entered and said: "Will it please you, madame, to see Madame Ashton and Mademoiselle?"

Madame d'Harville nodded assent, and a little girl slowly entered the room.

The child was about four years old, and would have been charmingly beautiful, but for the sickly pallor and extreme meagreness of its countenance. Madame Ashton, the governess, led her by the hand, but directly Claire (that was the name of the little girl) saw her mother, she extended her arms, and in spite of her evident weakness, ran towards her. Her light brown hair was plaited, and tied at each side of her forehead with bows of cherry-coloured riband. Her health was so delicate that she wore an over-dress of dark brown silk, instead of one of those pretty white muslin frocks trimmed with ribands of a similar colour as those in the hair, and cut over the bosom so as to show the plump, pinky arms and smooth, fair shoulders so lovely in healthy children. So sunken were the cheeks of Claire, that her large dark eyes looked quite enormous; but, weak as she appeared, a gentle and graceful smile lighted up her features, when she was placed upon her mother's lap, and embraced with sad and impassioned tenderness.

"How has she been of late, Madame Ashton?" asked Madame d'Harville of the governess.

"Pretty well, my lady; though once I was afraid ——"

"Again!" exclaimed Clémence, folding her daughter to her heart with involuntary emotion and terror.

"Fortunately, madame, I was deceived," added the governess; "the fit did not come on: Mademoiselle Clara became composed, and only suffered under a momentary weakness. She has slept but little this afternoon, but she was unwilling to go to bed for the night without embracing her mama."

"Poor, dear little angel!" cried Madame d'Harville, covering her daughter with the tenderest kisses.

The little girl returned these caresses with childish joy, when the folding doors of the drawing-room were suddenly thrown open, and a groom of the chambers announced: "His royal highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

Claire, standing upon her mother's lap, had folded her little arms round her neck, and was closely embracing her. At the sight of Rodolph, Clémence blushed deeply, placed her child gently on the carpet, and motioned to Madame Ashton to take her from the room; she then rose to receive her guest.

"Will you permit me, madame," said Rodolph, smilingly, after having respectfully bowed to the marquise, "to renew my acquaintance with my little friend, who, I fear, must have quite forgotten me?" And, stooping slightly, he offered his hand to the little Claire, who at first fixed her large, dark eyes upon him with an expression of curiosity; then, suddenly recognizing him, she nodded her little head prettily, and blew him a kiss from the tips of her thin, wan fingers.

"Do you remember his highness, my child?" asked Clémence of little Claire, who nodded an affirmative, and again with childish grace blew a kiss to Rodolph.

"Her health seems much improved since I last saw her," said he, in a tone of deep interest, addressing Clémence.

"She is certainly better, my lord, but she still suffers very much."

The marquise and the prince, each as embarrassed as the other by thoughts of the approaching conversation, would have been equally satisfied to defer it, even for a few minutes; but the governess discreetly withdrew the little girl, and Rodolph and Clémence were left alone.

The arm-chair in which Madame d'Harville was reclining, was placed beside the chimney-piece, against which Rodolph leaned as he stood opposite to her. Never had Clémence been more struck with the noble and prepossessing appearance of the prince, never had his voice sounded more gently or more sweetly upon her ear. Feeling how painful it would be to the marquise to commence the conversation, Rodolph said to her: "Madame, you have been the victim of an unworthy and treacherous action; a cowardly denunciation of the Countess Sarah Macgregor was very nearly your ruin."

"Can that be the case, my lord?" exclaimed Clémence. "My presentiments then have not deceived me! And how did your highness discover this?"

"I became aware of this infamy last night, and by a mere chance, at the ball of the Countess C * * *. I was sitting in a retired part of the winter-garden, when, unconscious that I was separated from them only by a clump of trees, the Countess Sarah and her brother talked quite plainly about their projects, and the snare that they had set for you. Anxious to apprize you of the peril that threatened you, I hurried to the ball of Madame de Nerval, hoping to meet you there, but found that you had not appeared. To write to you would only have been to incur the risk of my letter falling into the hands of the marquis, whose suspicions were already aroused. I preferred, therefore, to go and await your arrival at the house in the Rue du Temple, in order to baffle the treachery of the Countess Sarah. Allow me to hope you will pardon me for saying so much on a subject that must be distasteful to you. Be assured, that but for the letter which you have had the kindness to write to me, never in my life would I have in any way reverted to the subject."

After a momentary silence, Madame d'Harville replied: "There is but one way, my lord, in which I can prove to you how grateful I am for your generosity—it is, to confess to you, that which I have never revealed to any human being. This confession will not, indeed, justify me in your estimation, but it will probably cause you to think my conduct somewhat less culpable than it has yet appeared to you."

"Frankly, madame," said Rodolph, with a smile, "my position towards you is very embarrassing."

Clémence, astonished at the almost jesting tone in which he spoke, looked at Rodolph with surprise, and said: "How, my lord?"

"Thanks to a circumstance you doubtless can guess, I am compelled somewhat to play the part of a near relative, touching an adventure which, as you have escaped the odious treachery of the Countess Sarah, does not deserve to be so seriously looked at. But," continued Rodolph, with gentle and affectionate gravity, "your husband is almost the same to me as a brother; and before us, my father was devoted to his father by the most affectionate gratitude. It is therefore with all seriousness, that I congratulate you upon having maintained the peace and security of your husband."

"And, my lord, it is precisely because you honour M. de Harville with your friendship, that I am very anxious to make you acquainted with the whole truth; alike upon an in *interest* which must seem to you as unworthy as it really is, and upon my conduct, which looks like an injury towards him whom your highness calls 'almost a brother.'"

"Indeed, madame, I shall always be proud and happy to receive even the slightest proof of your confidence; yet you must permit me to say, as regards the interest of which you speak, that I am quite aware that you yielded fully as much to the ceaseless importunities of the Countess Sarah Macgregor, who had her own reasons for seeking your ruin, as to your sincere pity for the fancied unhappiness of M. Charles Robert. I also know, too, that you hesitated a long time before you could summon resolution to take the step which you now so deeply regret."

Clémence looked at the prince with surprise.

"You seem astonished! Well, in order that you may not fancy that I deal in witchcraft, I will tell you all about it some other day," said Rodolph, smiling. "But your husband—he is completely tranquillised, is he not?"

"Yes, my lord, replied Clémence, casting down her eyes with confusion; and, indeed, it is painful to me to hear him asking pardon for having suspected me, and praising my modest silence respecting my charitable deeds."

"Nay, do not blame an illusion which renders him so happy; on the contrary, do everything that you can to confirm him in the pleasant deception. If it were not forbidden me to speak lightly of this adventure, and if you were not concerned, madame, I should say, that never is a wife more charming to her husband than when she has some error to conceal. It is scarcely possible to form an idea of the coaxings and winning smiles that are elicited by a troubled conscience. When I was *young*," added Rodolph, with a smile, "I always experienced, despite of myself, a vague suspicion at any extraordinary display of tenderness; and by the same rule, I can say, for my own part, that I never felt myself more amiable than when I needed forgiveness: so, as soon as I perceived any over-anxiety expressed for my pleasure or gratification, I was quite convinced that it concealed something which required overlooking and pardoning."

Madame d'Harville became more and more astonished to hear Rodolph speak so lightly of an adventure which might have produced consequences so terrible to her; but, quickly perceiving that the prince endeavoured, beneath his affection of levity, to disguise the importance of the service that he had done, she felt deeply touched by his delicacy, and said: "I comprehend your generous wish, my lord, and you are fully at liberty to jest, and to forget the peril from which you have snatched me. But what I have now to say is so grave, so melancholy in its nature, and so closely connected with the events of this morning, and your advice may be so useful too me, that I entreat you to remember that you have saved both my honour and my life—yes, my lord, my life! My husband was armed, and, in the excess of his repentance, he has confessed that he followed me with the intention of killing me!"

"Great God!" exclaimed Rodolph, with deep emotion.

"It was his right, and he would have been justified in so doing," said Madame d'Harville, bitterly.

"Oh! I conjure you, madame," said Rodolph, who, this time, spoke very seriously, "yes, I conjure you to believe me quite incapable of being indifferent to aught that interests you. If I just now spoke somewhat lightly, I did so because I did not wish to awaken any melancholy thoughts in your mind as to what occurred this morning. But now, madame, I shall listen to you as with a religious seriousness, as you are so good as to say that my advice may be of service to you."

"Oh! very serviceable, my lord. But before I ask your counsel, allow me to say a few words to you concerning a period when you did not know me—the years preceding my marriage to M. d'Harville."

Rodolph bowed, and Clémence continued: "At sixteen years of age I lost my mother (and here a tear stole down the cheek of Madame d'Harville). I will not attempt to tell you how much I loved her. Imagine, my lord, the perfection of kindness here on earth. Her fondness for me was extreme, and in it she appeared to find a profound consolation for many bitter griefs. Having but little inclination for society, of delicate health, and naturally very sedentary, her greatest delight was to take the sole charge of my education; and her various and solid knowledge well fitted her for that self-imposed task.

"Conceive, my lord, the astonishment of my dear mother and myself, when, in my sixteenth year, my education almost finished, my father, on the plea of my mother's weak health, announced to us that a young and accomplished widow, rendered interesting by her misfortunes, would take upon herself the duty of completing what my mother had commenced. At first, my mother would not hear of this, and I entreated my father not to allow a stranger to interpose authority between myself and my mother; but he was inexorable, in spite of our tears, and Madame Roland, the widow of a colonel who died in India, took up her abode with us, and was entrusted with the duties and authority of governess to myself."

"What, the same Madame Roland whom your father married so soon after you gave your hand to M. d'Harville?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Was she very handsome?"

"Tolerably so, my lord."

"Very intellectual, then?"

"A talent for trickery and deceit—nothing more. At that time, she was about five-and-thirty years of age, with very light hair, and almost white eyelashes; her large, round eyes were of a very light blue; the expression of her

countenance was mild, and even humble; her disposition was cruelly perfidious, while her deportment was apparently submissive, even to baseness."

"And her education?"

"Positively bad, my lord; and I cannot comprehend how my father, till then a perfect slave to conventionalities, could fail to perceive that the woman's glaring incapacity must needs shamefully betray the real object of her presence in his house. My mother pointed out to him the complete ignorance of Madame Roland; he answered in a tone which prohibited all reply, that, competent or otherwise, the lady should keep the situation to which he had appointed her in his establishment. I learned this subsequently. From that moment, my poor mother understood all, and was deeply affected—less, I think, on account of her husband's infidelity, than on account of the domestic unhappiness to which such a connection must lead, and the account of which would probably reach my ears."

"But, only looking at his absurd passion, it seems to me that your father acted very unwisely in introducing this woman to his house."

"And your astonishment would be the greater on that point, my lord, had you known the extreme formality and circumspection of his character. Nothing could have led him thus to forget all the decencies of society, but the unbounded influence of Madame Roland—an influence the more potent, because she disguised her designs under the mask of intense love for him."

"But how old was your father at that time?"

"About sixty."

"And he really believed in the love of that young woman for him?"

"My father was one of the most fashionable men of his day, and Madame Roland, in obedience to her own cunning, or to the advice she received ——"

"Advice! Who then could advise her?"

"I shall presently have to tell you that, my lord. Imagining that a man who had been renowned for his gallantry would now, in his old age, be the better pleased with flatteries bestowed upon his person, and the more credulously receive such compliments as served to recal to his mind the best days of his life, this woman—incredible as it may appear—flattered my poor, deluded father upon the inimitable elegance of his figure and the gracefulness of his features. And he was sixty years of age! Notwithstanding the excellent sense which my father was acknowledged to possess, he blindly fell into the coarse and vulgar snare. Such was, and such still is, I doubt not, the secret of the influence this woman obtained over him. Really, my lord, in spite of my present sadness, I cannot refrain from smiling as I remember how often, before my marriage, I have heard Madame Roland assert and maintain, that what she called *real maturity* was the best period of life, and that this *maturity* scarcely commenced before fifty-five or sixty."

"The age of your father!"

"Just so, my lord. Then only, according to Madame Roland, do the intellect and the experience attain their full development; then only it was that an eminent man could enjoy the consideration to which he might be entitled from his position in the world; then, also, the whole aspect of the man and the gracefulness of his manners attained their full perfection; the countenance, at this period of a man's life, presenting a rare and divine commingling of graceful serenity and mild gravity. Then, a slight tinge of melancholy, caused by the deceptions inseparable from experience, completed the charm of *real maturity*—a charm only to be appreciated (Madame Roland hastily added) by women of heart and intellect, who have the good taste to despise the bursts of youthful folly in wild young fellows of forty, whose character presents no security for their conduct, and whose insignificantly juvenile features were not as yet impressed with that sublime and poetic expression, that majestic expansion which proclaims a profound knowledge of life."

Rodolph could not refrain from smiling at the powerful irony with which Madame d'Harville sketched this portrait of her mother-in-law.

"There is one thing," said Rodolph, "for which I can never pardon ridiculous people."

"What is that, my lord?"

"Being also wicked; because one cannot then laugh at them at one's ease."

"Perhaps they calculate upon that advantage, my lord."

"It is very probable, though equally to be deplored. For instance, if I could forget that this Madame Roland's conduct has of necessity done you a vast amount of evil, I should be delighted with that system of *real maturity*, so admirably contrasted with the wild youth of those mad boys of forty, who, according to her theory, would hardly be out of their *leading-strings*, as our grandfathers and grandmothers would say."

"The principal cause of my aversion for her was her odious conduct to my mother, and the fatally active part she took in bringing about my marriage," said the marquise, after a short pause.

Rodolph looked at her with surprise.

"M. d'Harville is your friend, my lord," said Clémence, in a firm tone. "I am perfectly aware of the grave importance of the words that I have spoken; presently you will admit the justice of them. But let me return to Madame Roland, established in our family as my governess, in spite of her acknowledged incapacity for that task. On this subject, my mother at length had a most painful altercation with my father, which drew down on us his extreme displeasure; and from that moment my mother and myself lived in complete seclusion in our apartments, while Madame Roland, in quality of my governess, directed the domestic affairs, and almost publicly did the honours of the house."

"How much your mother must have suffered!"

"More, far more on my account than on her own, my lord; for, as regarded me, she dreaded the future. Her health, always very delicate, daily became weaker, and she gradually sunk into a severe illness. It chanced, most unfortunately, that our family doctor, M. Sorbier, in whom she placed the highest confidence, died about this period, to the great regret of my mother. Madame Roland at once besought my father to confide my mother to the care of a particular friend of her own, an Italian doctor, whose skill she extolled very highly. Through her importunities, my deluded father, who had consulted him sometimes, and being satisfied with his treatment, proposed him to my mother, who, alas! raised no objection; and this man it was who attended her during her last illness." As she uttered these words, the eyes of Madame d'Harville became filled with tears. "I am

[The Scene at Aubiers.]

ashamed to confess my weakness, my lord," she added, "but simply from this doctor having been appointed at the recommendation of Madame Roland, he inspired me (and for no other reason then) with the most involuntary repugnance; and it was with fear and painful misgiving that I saw my mother accord to him her confidence. Still, as regarded his skill and knowledge of his profession, Doctor Polidori ——"

"What did you say, madame?—what do I hear?" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Are you indisposed, my lord?" asked Madame d'Harville, astounded at the strange and sudden change in the tone and countenance of Rodolph.

"But no, it cannot be!" said the prince, as though unconscious of the presence of the marquise; "no, I am doubtless mistaken! Five or six years must have elapsed since all this took place, while I am told that it is not more than two years since Polidori came to Paris, and under the protection of a false name. Undoubtedly it was he whom I saw yesterday—the charlatan Bradamanti! Yet it is strange—two doctors of the same name!* What a singular rencontre! Madame, a few words concerning this Doctor Polidori, if you please," said Rodolph to Madame d'Harville, who gazed on his agitated countenance with increasing surprise. "What was the age of this Italian?"

"About fifty."

"And his appearance—his features?"

"Very sinister; I shall never forget his singular, light-green eyes, and his nose curved like the beak of an eagle."

"'Tis he—'tis he himself!" exclaimed Rodolph; "and do you think, madame, that this

* We must remind the reader that Polidori was a doctor of some eminence, when he undertook the education of Rodolph.

Doctor Polidori whom you have been describing is still in Paris?"

"That I do not know, my lord. He quitted Paris about a year after my father's marriage. A lady of my acquaintance, who at this time also employed the Italian as her medical adviser—this lady, Madame de Lucenay ——"

"The Duchess de Lucenay!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Yes, my lord. But why does this astonish you?"

"Permit me to be silent on that head. But at the period of which you speak, what did Madame de Lucenay tell you about this man?"

"That from the time of his departure from Paris, he wrote her some very witty and clever letters upon the countries he passed through, for he was a great traveller. I just now remember that, about a month ago, I chanced to ask Madame de Lucenay if she had lately heard of or from M. Polidori, and she replied, with some embarrassment in her manner, that for a long time past nothing had been heard of him; that it was not known whither he had gone, and that some persons even supposed him to be dead."

"Singular, indeed!" said Rodolph, musing on the visit of Madame de Lucenay to the charlatan Bradamanti.

"You know this man then, my lord?"

"Yes, most unhappily for me, I do know him. But pray continue your narrative; perhaps I may hereafter tell you something of the history of this Polidori."

"Do you mean the doctor?"

"Rather say, the wretch sullied by the most odious and atrocious crimes."

"Crimes!" cried Madame d'Harville, in alarm; "has this man committed crimes—and he the friend of Madame Roland, and the doctor of my dear, departed mother?—of my mother, who died under his treatment after only a few days' illness! Ah, my lord, my presentiments have not deceived me."

"Your presentiments?"

"Yes. I just now mentioned to you the involuntary repugnance with which the doctor inspired me, on account of his having been introduced to us by Madame Roland; but I did not tell you all, my lord."

"How so?"

"I was fearful lest, in the bitterness of my regret, I should accuse an innocent man; but now, my lord, I feel justified in telling you everything. My mother had lain dangerously ill for five days; during which time I had watched beside her night and day. One evening, feeling more fatigued and depressed than usual, I went to breathe the fresh air on the terrace of the garden: at the end of about a quarter of an hour, I returned through a long and very dark gallery. By a faint light which streamed from the apartment of Madame Roland, I saw Doctor Polidori quit the room with that lady, who accompanied the doctor along the gallery. Being in the shadow, they did not perceive me. In a voice so low that I could not catch her words, Madame Roland made some remark, or asked some question. The doctor, in a much louder tone, replied: '*The day after to-morrow.*' Madame Roland again whispered something to him, and he replied with singular emphasis: '*The day after to-morrow, I tell you—the day after to-morrow.*'"

"What could be the meaning of these words?"

"What could they mean? Alas! it was on Wednesday evening I heard M. Polidori say: '*The day after to-morrow;*' and on the Friday my mother was dead!"

"Oh, horrible!"

"After this mournful event I was sent to make a short stay with a relation, who, forgetful of the reserve due to the afflicted state of my mind, as well as my tender age, told me what powerful reasons there were for my hating Madame Roland, and enlightened me as to the ambitious hopes entertained by this woman. Full well I could then imagine all my poor mother must have suffered. I thought my heart would burst the first time I again saw my father, which was upon the occasion of his coming to fetch me from the house of our relation, to take me into Normandy, where we were to pass the earlier period of our mourning. During the journey he informed me, without the least embarrassment, and as though it had been the most natural thing in the world, that out of regard for himself and me, madame had kindly consented to take the command of the establishment, and to act as my guide and friend. On arriving at Aubiers (so was my father's country seat called), the first person we encountered was Madame Roland, who had established herself here on the day of my mother's death. Spite of her humble, gentle manner, her countenance betrayed an ill-disguised triumph. Never shall I forget the look, at once ironical and spiteful, she received me with on my alighting from the carriage; it seemed to say: 'I am mistress here—'tis you who are the intruder.' A fresh grief was in reserve for me. Whether from an inexcusable want of proper judgment, or unpardonable impudence, this woman occupied the apartment which had been my mother's; in my indignation I complained to my father of this unfeeling impropriety. He answered me severely, saying that it was needless for me either to feel or express surprise on the subject, as it was his desire I should habituate myself to look upon and respect Madame Roland as a second mother. I replied, that it would be a profanation of that sacred name to act as he commanded; and, to his extreme wrath, I never allowed any opportunity to escape by which I could exhibit my deeply-rooted aversion to Madame Roland. At times my father's rage was unbounded, and bitterly would he reproach me in the presence of that woman, for the coldness and ingratitude of my conduct towards an angel of consolation, as he styled her, sent to us by Providence. 'Let me beg of you to speak for yourself alone,' said I, one day, quite wearied with the treatment induced by my father's blind infatuation. At length the harshness and unreasonableness of his conduct became quite unendurable; while Madame Roland, with the honied words of hypocrisy, would artfully intercede for me: 'You must be indulgent to Clémence,' she would say; 'the sorrow she experiences for the excellent parent we all so deeply deplore, is so natural, so laudable, that you should respect her grief, and pity her for her unjust suspicions.' "There! you hear her!' would my father exclaim, pointing with admiration to Madame Roland; 'what goodness! what generosity! Instantly entreat her pardon for your unworthy conduct.' 'The spirit of my beloved mother hears and sees us from on high,' I replied; 'she would never pardon such a degradation in her child!' and, with grief and mortification, I would quit the room, leaving my father to console Madame Roland, and dry her hypo-

critical tears. You will pardon me, my lord, for dwelling so long upon these seeming puerilities, but thus alone can I accurately describe to you the sort of life I led at that period."

"I could almost fancy myself present at these domestic scenes, so sad and yet so true. In how many families have they occurred, and will be renewed again and again! But in what capacity did your father introduce Madame Roland to the neighbourhood?"

"As my governess and his *friend*, and she was accepted accordingly."

"I need not ask you whether he lived in the same isolated state to which her questionable character condemned the lady?"

"With the exception of some few unfrequent visits which circumstances rendered unavoidable, she saw no one. My father, governed by his passion, or doubtless influenced by Madame Roland, threw off his mourning for my mother after having worn it scarcely three months, under the pretext that the sable garb continually reminded him of his loss, and that the only true mourning was the mourning of the heart. His manners to me daily became colder, while his indifference concerning me allowed a degree of liberty almost incredible in a person of my age. I saw him only at breakfast, after which he retired to his study with Madame Roland, who acted as secretary in his business correspondence; they either walked or drove out together afterwards, returning only an hour before dinner, for which Madame Roland would make a splendid toilet; while my poor father would dress himself in a manner ridiculously unsuited to his time of life. Sometimes, after dinner, he received a few persons he could not decently avoid asking to his house; on which occasions he would play at *tric-trac* with Madame Roland until ten o'clock, when he would offer his arm to conduct her to my mother's apartment, and then retired for the night. As for myself, the whole day was at my own disposal. Attended by a servant, I used to take long rides in the woods surrounding the château; and when, as sometimes happened, I felt my spirits too depressed to appear at table, not the slightest inquiry was ever made after me by my father, or my absence even noticed."

"What singular forgetfulness—what cruel abandonment!"

"Having several times accidentally encountered one of our neighbours in the woods where I usually rode on horseback, I renounced these pleasant rambles, and confined myself entirely to the park."

"But how did this infamous woman conduct herself towards you when alone with her?"

"She, as well as I, shunned all such occasions as much as possible; but once that we were unexpectedly alone together, and she was reproaching me for some severe words I had spoken the preceding evening, she said, coldly: 'Have a care: you cannot contend against my power; any such attempt will bring down certain destruction on your head.' 'As it did upon that of my poor mother,' answered I. 'It is a pity, madame, you have not M. Polidori by your side, to announce to you that your vengeance can be satisfied—*the day after to-morrow*.'"

"And what reply did she make when you thus recalled those fearful words of Polidori?"

"She changed colour rapidly—from a slight blush, her features became of a deathly paleness; then, quickly conquering her emotion, she angrily demanded what I meant by those words. 'Ask your own heart, madame,' answered I; 'your conscience will find a ready explanation.' Shortly after that, a scene occurred which may be said to have decided my fate. Among a great number of family portraits which graced the walls of the *salon* in which we usually passed the evening, was that of my mother. One day I observed that this portrait had been removed from its accustomed place. Two neighbours had dined with us; one of them, a M. Dorval, a country lawyer, had always expressed for my mother the utmost veneration and respect. When we reached the *salon* after dinner, I inquired of my father what had become of my mother's portrait. 'The sight of that portrait,' replied my father, in an embarrassed tone, 'caused me too much pain;' and with a gesture he directed my attention to the fact of strangers being present. 'And where is the portrait, now?' asked I. Turning with a gesture of impatience to Madame Roland, he said: 'Where has that portrait been put?' 'In the wardrobe,' replied she, at the same time casting a look of defiance at me, evidently supposing that the presence of our visitors would prevent me from making any further observation. She was mistaken, for I indignantly replied: 'I can very easily conceive, madame, that the look of my mother must be painful to you, but that was scarcely a reason for placing out of sight the portrait of a woman who, when you were in want and misery, charitably permitted you to share her home.'"

"Excellent!" cried Rodolph. "Your icy contempt must have been crushing to her."

"'Mademoiselle!' exclaimed my father, 'you forget that this lady has watched, and still continues to watch, with maternal solicitude, over your education; you also seem to have lost all recollection of the very high esteem and respect I entertain for her; and, since you allow yourself thus to attack her before strangers, you will permit me to inform you that the charge of ingratitude lies at the door of her who, overlooking the tender care and attention she has received, presumes to reproach with misfortunes nobly sustained, a person deserving of the utmost interest and respect.' 'I cannot permit myself to discuss the question with *you*, my dear father,' said I, submissively. 'Perhaps then, mademoiselle, you will favour me with that preference!' cried Madame Roland, carried away by rage beyond the bounds of her usual prudence—'perhaps you will permit me to assert that, so far from owing the slightest obligation to your mother, I have nothing to remember but the coldness and aversion she invariably manifested towards me, fully expressive of the disgust and displeasure with which my residence in the house inspired her.' 'Ah, madame!' said I, interrupting her, 'out of respect to my father, if not to spare your own blushes, let us dispense with these shameful confessions, or you will make even me regret having exposed you to such a deeply humiliating disclosure.'"

"Better and better!" cried Rodolph; "it was a perfect slaughter. And this woman?"

"By a very vulgar though convenient expedient, Madame Roland contrived to put an end to this conversation. With a sudden cry she threw herself in a chair, and very naturally imitated a swoon. Thanks to this incident, the

two visitors quitted the room on the pretext of going for assistance, and I followed their example, leaving my father hanging in deep anxiety over Madame Roland.

"Doubtless your next interview with your father was a very unpleasant one."

"He came to my apartment on the following morning, and, without further preface, said to me: 'In order to prevent a recurrence of the disgraceful scene of yesterday, I have to inform you that, as soon as decency permits us to throw off our mourning, it is my intention to marry Madame Roland, which will compel you to treat her with the respect due to my *wife*. For certain private reasons, it is expedient you should marry before me: you will have your mother's fortune, amounting to more than a million francs, for your portion. From this day I shall take the necessary steps to form a suitable match for you, from among the various proposals I have received for your hand.' After this conversation I lived more alone than ever, never meeting my father except at our meals, which generally passed off in sad and sickening silence. So really dull and lonely was my life, that I only waited for my father to propose any suitor he might choose, to accept him for my husband. Madame Roland, having relinquished all her ill-natured remarks about my deceased parent, avenged herself by inflicting on me the continual pain of seeing her appropriate to herself the various articles that had belonged to my mother. Her easy chair, embroidery-frame, the books which composed her private library, even a screen I myself had embroidered for her, and in the centre of which were our united ciphers: these, and many other articles of taste and ornament, this woman laid her sacrilegious hands upon, and claimed as her own."

"Oh! I can well imagine the horror these profanations caused you."

"Still great as were my sufferings, my lonely, isolated state rendered them even greater."

"And you had no one, no person in whom you could confide?"

"No one; but at this time I received a proof of interest on my behalf, which affected me much, and which should have opened my eyes to the dangers preparing for me. One of the two persons present during the scene in which I had so unceremoniously treated Madame Roland, was a M. Dorval, a worthy old notary, to whom my mother had rendered some marked service. After the prohibition of my father, I never entered the *salon* when strangers were there; I had not, consequently, seen M. Dorval for some time, when, great was my surprise to see him coming towards me one day in the park, while I was taking my accustomed walk. 'Mademoiselle,' said he to me, 'I am fearful of being observed by the count your father; read this letter, and destroy it immediately—its contents are most important to you.' So saying, he disappeared as suddenly as he came. In this letter he informed me that it was in contemplation to marry me to the Marquis d'Harville, and that the match appeared in every respect eligible, inasmuch as all who knew him concurred in bearing testimony to the many excellent qualities of M. d'Harville, who was young, rich, good-looking, and highly distinguished for his talents and mental attainments; yet that successively, the families of two young ladies, with whom he had been on the point of marriage, had abruptly broken off the treaties. The notary added, that although entirely ignorant of the cause of these ruptures, he still considered it his duty to apprise me of them, without at all insinuating that they originated in any circumstance that was in the slightest degree discreditable to M. d'Harville. The two young ladies alluded to were, one the daughter of M. Beauregard, a peer of France; the other of Lord Dudley. M. Dorval concluded by saying, that he was induced to make this communication to me, because my father, in his extreme desire to conclude the marriage, did not appear to attach sufficient importance to the circumstances now detailed."

"Why, in fact," said Rodolph, after some moments' reflection, "I remember that your husband, in the interval of a year, told me of two successive matches which had been broken off just as all arrangements had appeared to be concluded, and ascribing their abrupt termination to a difficulty in arranging matters of a mere pecuniary nature."

Madame d'Harville smiled bitterly, and replied: "You shall know the truth of those motives presently, my lord. After having read the old notary's letter, I felt equal anxiety and curiosity. Who was M. d'Harville? My father had never mentioned him to me; it was in vain that I racked my memory—I could not even recollect that name. Soon after this, Madame Roland, to my great astonishment, set out for Paris. Her journey was only to occupy a week at most, yet my father felt the deepest grief at this temporary separation; his temper became more sour than ever, and he redoubled the coolness of his manner towards me. One day, when I asked him how he was, he even went so far as to reply: 'I am ill, and it is owing to you that I am so!' 'To me, father?' I exclaimed. 'Yes, certainly. You know how much I am accustomed to the society of Madame Roland, and that excellent woman, whom you have so much outraged, has left me to undertake her present journey solely on your account.' This mark of Madame Roland's *int rest* alarmed me; I felt a vague presentiment that her journey had some reference to my marriage. I will not attempt to describe to you, my lord, the joy of my father on the return of my future step-mother. The next day he sent to desire my company. I found him alone with her. 'I have for some time past,' said he, 'been reflecting upon the necessity of settling you. Your mourning will terminate in another month. To-morrow I expect a visit from the Marquis d'Harville, a very distinguished and very wealthy young man, and one who is in every way calculated to make you happy. He has seen you in company, and is very desirous of being united to you; all pecuniary matters are brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and it therefore entirely depends upon yourself whether you will be married within the next six weeks. If, on the contrary, by some caprice which I cannot foresee, you think fit to refuse this almost unhoped-for and excellent match, I shall in no respect alter my intentions of marrying as soon as I am out of mourning; in which case, I feel bound to tell you, your presence in my house will only be agreeable to me on condition of your solemnly promising to treat *my wife* with the respect and tenderness to which she is entitled.' 'I understand you,' replied I; 'if I do not accept M. d'Harville, you will marry all the same, and then it will not be inconvenient for you and madame, if I retire to the Convent of the Holy Heart?' 'Not at all,' replied my father, coldly."

"Ah, that was more than *weakness;* it was cruelty!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Do you know, my lord, what has always prevented me from feeling any resentment against my father? A sort of presentiment that one day or another he would pay—alas! but too dearly—for his blind passion for Madame Roland. God be praised, that day has not yet come!"

"And did you say nothing to him about what the old notary had informed you as to the abrupt breaking off of the two marriages M. d'Harville had been on the point of contracting?"

"Yes, my lord, that very day I begged my father to grant me a few moments' private conversation; upon which Madame Roland rose, and abruptly quitted the apartment. 'I feel no aversion to the union you propose for me, father,' said I, 'only I have heard that M. d'Harville has twice before been on the point of marriage.' 'Well, well—yes,' interrupted he, hastily; 'I know all about that; those marriages were broken off in consequence of disagreements in pecuniary matters; and in those disputes, moreover, M. d'Harville showed the utmost possible delicacy. If you have no other objection, you may consider the match as concluded upon, and look upon yourself as married; for, in giving you in marriage, I have nothing in view but your happiness.'"

"No doubt Madame Roland was delighted with this union."

"Delighted! oh, yes, my lord," replied Clémence, bitterly, "oh! delighted, indeed; for this union was of her own effecting. It was she who gave my father the first idea of it. She well knew the *real* cause of the breaking off of the marriages so nearly completed by M. d'Harville, and that was precisely the reason why she was so anxious that I should become his wife."

"But with what motive?"

"She sought to be revenged on me by devoting me to a most frightful fate."

"But your father ——"

"Deceived by Madame Roland, he really believed that interested motives alone had been the cause of setting aside M. d'Harville's marriage."

"What a horrible plot! But what then was this mysterious reason?"

"I will tell you presently, my lord. M. d'Harville arrived at Aubiers. His manners, his mind, his countenance, all pleased me. He seemed mild and amiable, though rather melancholy. I remarked in him a contrast which at once astonished and pleased me: his mind was highly cultivated, his fortune was princely, and his birth illustrious; yet, there were times when his physiognomy, ordinarily resolute and energetic, expressed an almost timid, shrinking look, as though he feared even his own self, which greatly interested me. I took much pleasure in remarking the delightful kindness with which he constantly behaved to an old *valet de chambre*, who had lived with him from his childhood, and whom alone he would allow to wait upon him. Shortly after his arrival, M. d'Harville remained in his own apartments for two days; my father desired to see him, but the old servant denied him admission, on the plea that M. d'Harville had so violent a headache, that he could receive no one. When M. d'Harville left his chamber, he appeared to me very pale and thin; and subsequently he always displayed impatience and uneasiness whenever this temporary illness was mentioned to him. As I became more intimate with M. d'Harville, I still discovered new qualities in him that excited my sympathy. He had so many and such great reasons to be happy, that I felt pleased with him for the modesty with which he enjoyed his advantages. The day for our marriage being fixed, he anticipated or met my slightest wishes in all the projects that we formed for the future; and when I sometimes questioned him on his melancholy, he spoke to me of his parents, who would have been so delighted to see him married so completely according to his heart and his taste, and I could not with any good grace refuse to admit of reasons so flattering to myself. M. d'Harville guessed the terms upon which I had recently lived with Madame Roland and my father, although the latter, pleased with my approaching marriage, which facilitated his own, had now become excessively kind to me. In some of our conversations, M. d'Harville, with great tact and good feeling, hinted to me that he probably loved me all the more on account of my past sorrows. I thought it my duty, while we were upon this subject, to inform him of my father's intention to marry again; and as I pointed out to him the difference this would make as to my fortune, he would not permit me to proceed, and perfectly convinced me of his truly noble disinterestedness in seeking my hand. I could not but think that the families who had so abruptly broken off his former projected alliances must have been very sordid or unreasonable, to make any difficulty with one so generous and easy as M. d'Harville."

"That is what I have always observed in him," said Rodolph; "I have ever found him all heart, devotedness, and delicacy. But did you never speak to him about his two previous matrimonial disappointments?"

"I must confess to you, my lord, that seeing him so kind and considerate, the question often rose to my lips, but just as often the very fear of wounding the sensitiveness of his nature, prevented me from venturing to broach the subject. The nearer the day fixed for our marriage approached, the more happy M. d'Harville professed himself to be; and yet I two or three times saw him overwhelmed with deep melancholy. One day in particular, as he fixed his eyes upon me, I observed that they were actually filled with tears; and he seemed so overcome, that one would have supposed that he wished, and yet dared not, to confide some important secret to me. The remembrance of the two former prospects of marriage recurred to my mind, and I must confess that I felt some alarm. A vague presentiment warned me that the happiness of my whole life was at stake—perhaps jeopardised for ever! But then again, I was so anxious to quit my father's house, that I surmounted all my fears, and turned a deaf ear to every suggestion of evil."

"And did M. d'Harville confide nothing on the subject to you?"

"Nothing; when I asked him the cause of his sadness, he replied: 'Forgive me, but I am most happy in my own melancholy way.' These words, pronounced in the most touching tone, somewhat reassured me. And then, how could I possibly, at the very moment when his eyes swam in tears, and his voice became choked with emotion, be so cruel as to show any suspicion with reference to the past?"

"M. d'Harville's witnesses to the marriage contract, M. de Lucenay and M. de Saint-Remy, arrived at Aubiers some days previous to the

ceremony, to which only my nearest relations were invited, and immediately after we were to set out for Paris. I had experienced no love for M. d'Harville, but I felt interested in him, and both his temper and disposition inspired me with esteem; but for the events which followed this fatal marriage, a still more tender sentiment would doubtless have attached me to him. We were married ——"

At these words, Madame d'Harville turned pale, and for an instant her resolution seemed to have abandoned her; but she quickly recovered, and resumed: "Directly after we were married, my father tenderly embraced me, as did also Madame Roland; and in the presence of so large a company, I could not avoid this fresh display of hypocrisy. With her dry, white hand she wrung rather than pressed mine, as she whispered in my ear, in a perfidiously honied tone, these words, which, to my dying hour, I shall never forget: 'Think of me sometimes in the midst of your happiness, *for it is I who have accomplished your marriage.*' Alas! I was far from comprehending the full force of those words. Our marriage was celebrated at eleven o'clock, and soon after we entered our carriage, followed by my maid and M. d'Harville's *valet de chambre;* and we travelled so rapidly, that we reached Paris by ten at night. I should have been astonished at the silence and melancholy of M. d'Harville, had I not known that his was what he termed a *melancholy happiness.* For my own part, I was painfully affected; I was returning to Paris for the first time since the death of my mother; I was about to arrive with my husband, whom I had known scarcely six weeks, and who, up to the previous evening, had never addressed me but with the most respectful formality. Perhaps sufficient consideration is not given to the fear that we experience at this sudden change of tone and manner which even well-bred men allow themselves as soon as we belong to them; they do not reflect that the young wife cannot in a few hours forget the timidity and the scruples of the youthful maiden."

"Nothing has ever appeared to me more barbarous than this custom of carrying off a young bride as soon as the marriage ceremony is over—a ceremony which should only consecrate the right to employ all the resources of love, all the seductions of impassioned tenderness, to render mutual affection still stronger and more endearing."

"You will imagine, my lord, the sinking of heart and the vague alarm with which I reentered Paris—that city in which I had lost my mother barely a year before. We arrived at the Hotel d'Harville ——"

The emotion of the young lady redoubled; her cheeks were covered with burning blushes, and in a voice of agony she added: "You should know all—yes, all; otherwise I shall appear too despicable in your eyes. Well then," she resumed, with desperate resolution, "I was conducted to the apartment destined for me, and left there by myself. In about an hour M. d'Harville joined me. Notwithstanding his protestations of tenderness, I felt ready to die with fright; my sobs half choked me—but I was his, and it was necessary that I should resign myself. But soon my husband, uttering a terrible cry, seized my arm with violence. I endeavoured to release myself from his iron grasp; I implored him to have mercy upon me—he did not even hear me! His countenance was contracted by the most frightful convulsions; his eyes rolled with a rapidity which fixed my gaze upon them as if by fascination; his mouth was contorted, and filled with a bloody foam; his hand still maintained its agonising grasp upon my arm! I made a desperate effort; his stiffened fingers at length relaxed their hold, and I fell fainting to the floor at the moment when M. d'Harville was struggling in the paroxysm of this horrible attack! Such was my wedding-night, my lord—such was the vengeance of Madame Roland!"

"Unfortunate woman!" said Rodolph, in a tone of the deepest sympathy. "I understand it all—epileptic! Ah, it is indeed frightful!"

"Nor is that all," added Clémence, in a voice almost choked by emotion. "My daughter, my angel child, has inherited that frightful malady!"

"Your daughter—she! What! her pallor—her weakness ——"

"Is, I tremble to believe, hereditary; and the doctors therefore think that the disease is incurable."

Madame d'Harville covered her face with her hands; overwhelmed by this sad revelation, she had not courage to add another word. Rodolph also was silent. His mind recoiled affrighted before the horrible mysteries of that appalling wedding-night. He pictured to himself that young girl, already so saddened by her return to the city in which her mother had died, arriving in that strange house alone with a man for whom she felt an interest, but not love—nought of that love which so delightfully disturbs and intoxicates, and makes the young wife forget her chaste alarm in the rapture of a legitimate and reciprocal passion. No, no; on the contrary, trembling with modest terror, poor Clémence arrived there—sad, cold, with a sinking heart — her brow burning with blushes, her eyes bathed in tears. She resigned herself to duty, to necessity; and then, instead of hearing the words of gratitude, of love, and of tenderness, to console her for the sorrowful feelings which were uppermost in her mind, she sees convulsed at her feet a man utterly senseless, who writhed, foamed, and howled in the hideous convulsions of one of the most fearful infirmities with which a man can be incurably stricken! And that is not all. Her child, poor innocent little angel, is also withered from her birth! These painful and melancholy confessions awakened in Rodolph's mind some very serious reflections. "Such," said he, "is the law of this country. A young girl, lovely and pure, gentle and confiding, the victim of a fatal dissimulation, unites her destiny to that of a man who is subject to a frightful malady—a fatal heritage which he transmits to his children! The unfortunate wife discovers this horrible mystery. What remedy has she?—none! Nothing can she do but suffer and weep, and struggle against her fear and disgust; nothing but pass her days in infinite agonies and terrors; nothing, perchance, but seek guilty consolations beyond the desolate existence that has been created for her! In these laws the mere animals seem altogether superior to man—by the cares bestowed upon them, by the improvements sought to be made in them, by the protection which surrounds, and by the guarantees which cover them. Purchase an animal, and if an unforeseen disorder exhibits itself in that animal after the purchase, the sale is null and void. Indeed, what a shame, what an outrage on the rights of society it would be, to compel a man to keep a coughing, lame, or roaring horse! Yes, that would be a

scandal, a crime, a monstrosity unequalled! Only fancy what it must be to be compelled always—*always* to keep a mule that coughs, a horse that roars, or an ass that is dead lame! What frightful consequences might this not produce to the human race! Therefore, in such cases, agreement, contract, purchase, sale—all are set aside; the all-powerful law undoes all that has been done. But let the question concern a creature made after the image of God—let it concern a confiding, virtuous young girl, who, in her innocent trust in the honour of a man, has become united to him, and awakens to find herself the companion of an epileptic — an unfortunate wretch who is stricken with a terrible malady, whose moral and physical consequences are terrible; a malady which may throw disorder and aversion into the family, perpetuate a horrible disease, vitiate successive generations—oh! then this law so inexorable about diseased animals, so admirably provident, that it wills not that a blemished horse shall be fit for propagation—this law carefully abstains from unbinding the unhappy girl who is the victim of such a union! The bonds of marriage are indissoluble; to break them would be to offend both God and man! In truth," continued Rodolph, "man sometimes displays a very disgraceful humility, and an egotism of pride that is very execrable. He values himself at less than the beasts, in heaping upon them the securities which he refuses to himself; and imposes, perpetuates, and consecrates his own most dreadful diseases, by putting them under the safeguard of the immutability of laws, human and divine!"

Rodolph attached considerable blame to M. d'Harville, but he resolved that he would endeavour to make some excuse for him in the eyes of Clémence, although he could not conceal from himself, after her sad recital, that the marquis had for ever lost her love. Thought succeeded thought, and Rodolph said to himself: "By duty I have estranged myself from a woman whom I love, and who, perhaps, feels a secret preference for me. Either from pity or mere friendship, she has nearly lost her honour—nay, her very life, for an arrant fool whom she deemed unfortunate. If, instead of estranging myself from her, I had shown my care, my respect, my love, my reserve might have been such that not the slightest breath of calumny could have tainted her reputation—her husband's suspicions never would have been excited; while, now, she is almost at the mercy of such an ass as M. Charles Robert; and he, I fear, will be much more indiscreet in proportion as he has the less right to be so. And again, who knows whether, despite the dangers she has risked, Madame d'Harville's heart may always remain free? All reconciliation with her husband is from this time impossible. Young, lovely, surrounded by the gay, and sympathising with all who suffer, with what dangers is her path threatened! For M. d'Harville, what must be his future sorrow, what must be the anguish of his mind! Jealous of his wife, who cannot subdue the disgust and fright which he excited in her on their nuptials—racked with doubt, yet fondly loving her—what a fate is his!"

Clémence, her forehead resting on her hand, her eyes moist, her cheek burning with blushes, shunned the gaze of Rodolph, so much had the revelation cost her.

"Now," exclaimed Rodolph, after a long silence, "I understand the cause of M. d'Harville's sadness—a grief which hitherto I have been unable to comprehend. I can imagine his regret ——"

"His regret!" exclaimed Clémence; "say, rather, his remorse, my lord — if he can feel any — for never was a crime more deliberately planned."

"Crime, madame?"

"And what else is it, my lord, to unite to yourself, by indissoluble ties, a girl who relies on your honour, when you yourself know that a disease which inspires dread and horror has fatally stricken you? What else is it, to devote a wretched child to similar misery? What compelled M. d'Harville thus to make two victims?—a blind, insensate passion? No; my fortune, my person suited his taste. He wished to effect a *marriage of convenience*, because he was, doubtless, tired of a bachelor's life."

"Madame, have some pity, at least."

"Pity! who then deserves it but my daughter? Wretched victim of this odious marriage, what nights and days have I passed by her side! what bitter tears have her sufferings wrung from my eyes!"

"But her father—he has to bear the same unmerited sufferings."

"But it is that father who has condemned her to an infancy of misery, to a withering youth, and, if she survives, to live a life of loneliness and sorrow, for she shall never marry. No! I love her too much to expose her to a like fate—to suffer her to weep over her own offspring, for ever blighted, as I have wept for her. I have suffered too much from her father's treachery, to become an accomplice to so vile a deception."

"You are quite right; the revenge of your mother-in-law is horrible. But, patience; perhaps the time will come when you, in turn, may be revenged," said Rodolph, after a moment's reflection.

"What say you, my lord?" enquired Clémence, astonished at the tone in which he had spoken.

"I have always had the satisfaction of seeing the wicked punished—cruelly punished, for their crimes," added he, with a vehemence that made Clémence start. "But what said your husband on the day which succeeded this unhappy night?"

"He confessed, with a strange ingenuousness, that those families whose alliance he had sought, had discovered his malady, and each projected union had been at once cancelled. Thus, having twice been rejected, he had the atrocity, the unmanliness to drag a third poor victim into the abyss of misery from which the other two had been preserved; and yet, such is the creature whom the world calls a gentleman—a man of honour!"

"You who are always so good, are now full of harshness."

"I am harsh, because I have been cruelly deceived. M. d'Harville knew me well; why did he not candidly tell me the whole truth, and throw himself on my kindness and generosity?"

"You would have refused him."

"Your words only add to his greater condemnation, my lord; his conduct was vilely treacherous, if he feared my refusal."

"But he loved you."

"If he loved me, should he have sacrificed me to his selfishness? Nay, so wretched was my position at the time, and such my desire to quit my paternal home, that if he had been frank with me, perhaps I should have been moved by his

terrible revelation—by the loneliness to which a frightful and fatal destiny had doomed him. Yes, seeing him at once so ingenuous and so unhappy, I could not have had the courage to have rejected him; and if I had thus bound myself by a sacred vow to meet the consequences of my devotion, I would willingly have kept my oath. But to wish to compel my pity by first making me dependent on him—to exact that pity from my duty as a wife to him who, as a man of honour, has sacrificed his own duty, is both cowardice and folly. Now, my lord, be you the judge of my life, of the gross deception of which I am the victim: I had faith in the honour of M. d'Harville, and he has basely deceived me. His melancholy, his mild and timid bearing interested me; and yet this melancholy which he attributed to pious recollections, was caused by the consciousness of his incurable infirmity."

"But yet, even though he were to you a stranger—nay, an enemy—the sight of his sufferings should claim your pity; your heart is noble and generous."

"But can I calm those sufferings? If he could distinguish my voice, or if only a look of recognition answered my sorrowing glance! But, no! Oh! you know not, my lord, how frightful is that crisis when a man is overwhelmed with savage fury—when he sees, and hears, and feels nothing, and only recovers from this frenzy to become sullen and morose. When my child sinks beneath one of these attacks, my heart bursts with grief to see her poor little frame stiffened and distorted with the convulsions which accompany it. But she is my child, my own daughter; and when I see her suffer thus, my hate and aversion for her father are increased a hundredfold. When my child's sufferings cease, then does my irritation against my husband cease likewise; then, yes, then I pity him—then the natural tenderness of my heart makes my angry feelings give place to a sort of painful commiseration for him. But thus it it is: I am married at seventeen, to feel nothing but these alternations of hate and of painful pity—to weep over a wretched child whom I may not rear! Speaking of my child, allow me, my lord, to anticipate a reproach which, I doubt not, I deserve, and which you, perhaps, would be unwilling to cast upon me. She is so interesting, that she ought sufficiently to occupy my heart, for I love her passionately; but this wounded affection is so mixed with present bitterness, and with so much fear for the future, that my tenderness for my daughter always resolves itself in tears and bitter grief. When with her, my heart is broken, tortured, desparing; for I am powerless in overcoming a malady pronounced by the faculty incurable. Then, by way of relief and repose from the atmosphere of wretchedness which surround me, I took refuge in an attachment which —— Alas! I was deceived, unworthily deceived; I avow it, and I fall back into the mournful existence to which my husband has doomed me. But, tell me, my lord, was this the life that I had a right to expect? Am I alone guilty of the injuries that M. d'Harville would this morning have made me pay with my life? My fault was great, I admit, which leaves me so much more reason to blush for my choice. Happily for me, my lord, the conversation you overheard between the Countess Sarah and her brother, on the subject of M. Charles Robert, will spare me the shame I should otherwise have felt in making this new avowal; but I hope, at least, that I now merit from you as much pity as blame."

"I cannot express to you, madame, how much your recital has moved me. From the death of your mother till the birth of your daughter, what devouring griefs, what hidden sorrows have you not been called upon to endure! You — so brilliant, so admired, so envied!"

"Oh! believe me my lord, when one is suffering under misfortunes, it is frightful to hear the question openly expressed: 'Is she as happy as she appears to be?'"

"It is, indeed—nothing is more painful; but you are not the only one who suffers from the cruel contrast of what is, and what appears to be."

"How so, my lord?"

"In the eyes of all who know you, your husband ought to appear still more happy than you do, since he possesses you; yet is he not much to be pitied? Can there be in the world an existence more wretched than his? His wrongs towards you are great, but for them is he not frightfully punished? He loves you as you deserve to be loved, and he knows that for him you can only entertain an insurmountable repugnance. In his suffering, sickly child he sees an incessant reproach; nor is this all—jealousy assails him with her nameless tortures!"

"And how can I help that, my lord? By not giving him occasion to be jealous, you will answer. But think you that because my heart is unpossessed, it will the more be his? He knows it cannot. Since the frightful scene that I have related to you, we have lived entirely apart; but in the eyes of the world, I show him the respect that our union demands. To you alone, my lord, have I ever breathed a syllable of this fatal secret; thus, therefore, I venture to ask advice of you which I could not solicit from any other human being."

"And I assure you, madame, that if the service I have rendered you merits a recompense, I consider myself a thousand times repaid by your confidence. But since you ask my advice, and will permit me to speak to you frankly ——"

"Oh! I entreat you to do so, my lord!"

"Then, let me tell you, for want of well employing one of your most valuable qualities, you lose great enjoyments, which would not only fill up the void of your heart, but would divert you from your domestic griefs, and effectually supply that want of lively and poignant emotions, and I dare almost venture to add (pardon me for my bad opinion of your sex), that natural taste for mystery and intrigue, which has so great a command over most women."

"What would you say, my lord?"

"I would tell you that, if you desire to *amuse* yourself by doing good, there is nothing that could more highly please or interest you."

Madame d'Harville looked at Rodolph with astonishment.

"And understand," resumed he, "that I do not speak of your sending indifferently, almost with disdain, alms to those unfortunate creatures of whom you know nothing, and who often do not merit your kindness; but if you would *amuse* yourself, as I do, in occasionally playing at the game of *Providence*, you would avow,

that *good deeds* have sometimes all the piquancy and charm of romance."

"I must confess, my lord," said Clèmence, smiling in her turn, "it has never occurred to me to consider charity as an *amusement*."

"It is a discovery that I owe to my horror of all that is wearisome; a horror with which my political conferences with my ministers has inspired me. But to return to our *amusing* benevolence. I have not, alas! the virtue of those disinterested persons who confide to others the care of distributing their alms. If it required simply to send one of my chamberlains to carry some hundreds of louis to each department of Paris, I confess, to my shame, the scheme would not interest me, whilst to do good according to my fashion, there is nothing in the world more *amusing*. I adopt this word, because for me it signifies everything—all that pleases, all that charms, all that attaches; and really, madame, if you would become my accomplice in some *dark intrigues* of this nature, you would see, I repeat, that, apart even from the praiseworthiness of the act, nothing is more rare, more engaging, more attractive, and occasionally more diverting, than these charitable adventures. And, then, what mystery is requisite to hide one's benevolence! What precautions we take not to be known! What divers and powerful emotions are excited at the sight of poor and worthy people crying with joy at the sight of you! Depend upon it such a spectacle is more gratifying than the angry countenance of a jealous or an unfaithful lover—and they are nearly all so in turn. The emotions of which I am speaking, resemble very nearly those you experienced this morning in going to the Rue du Temple. Simply dressed to avoid being remarked, you left your home with a beating heart; you also entered with uneasiness some humble coach, the blinds of which you let down, that you might not be seen; and then, casting your eyes from side to side, fearful of surprise, you stealthily enter a house of wretched appearance—as you did this morning; the only difference is, that you may say: 'If I am discovered, I am lost;' or, on the contrary: 'Should they discover me, I shall be overwhelmed with blessings.' But as modesty is one of your many adorable qualities, you would exercise the utmost caution to prevent yourself from being known."

"Ah, my lord!" cried Madame d'Harville, with tenderness, "you have saved me! I cannot express the novel ideas, the consoling hopes, which your words awaken in me! You say, truly, to occupy your heart and mind in making those who suffer adore you, is almost to love! When I compare the existence that I foresee, to that which a shameful error might have doomed me for ever, the reproaches I heap on myself become still more bitter."

"I should indeed be grieved," rejoined Rodolph, smiling, "were that to be the case, for all my desire is to assist you in forgetting the past, and solely to prove to you that the distractions of the heart are various; the *means* of good and evil are often almost the same—the *end* alone differs. In a word, if the good is as attractive, as *amusing* as the bad, why give preference to the bad? I am about to make a very vulgar and commonplace comparison. Why is it that women select for their lovers men who are in every respect inferior to their husbands? Because the greatest charm in love consists in the difficulties that surround it; for, if you deprive love of its fears, its anguish, its mysteries and dangers, there will remain nothing, or very little—simply the lover; in a word, it will always be, more or less, very much after the fashion of that man to whom was said: 'Why do you not marry your mistress?'—'Alas! I have often thought of it,' answered he; 'but I should no longer know where to pass my evenings.'"

"That is a little too true, my lord," said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Well then, if I can find means to cause you to feel these fears, these anguishes, these inquietudes, which so allure you; if I can make useful your natural taste for mystery and adventure, your leaning to dissimulation and cunning—my bad opinion of women will, you perceive, peep out in spite of me," added Rodolph, gaily—"shall I not change into generous qualities, instincts which otherwise are merely imperious, ungovernable impulses—excellent, if well employed—fatal, if badly directed. Say then, shall we plan between ourselves all sorts of benevolent machinations, of charitable dissipations? We will have our place of meeting, our correspondence, our secrets, and, above all, we will hide our doings from the marquis, for your visit this morning to the Morels has no doubt roused his suspicion; in short, if you consent, we will commence a regular intrigue."

"I accept, with joy and gratitude, this *mysterious* association, my lord," said Clémence; "and to begin our romancing, I will return tomorrow to those poor creatures to whom this morning I could only offer a few words of consolation; for taking advantage of my trouble and alarm, a little lame boy stole from me the purse which you had entrusted to me. Ah, my lord!" added Clémence, and her face lost the sweet expression of gaiety which had for a moment animated it; "if you could know what misery, what a horrible picture of wretchedness—— No! no! I cannot believe that any others so unfortunate can exist! And yet I complain! and yet I accuse my destiny!"

Rodolph, not wishing that Madame d'Harville should observe how much he was touched by this return to herself, which proved the noble qualities of her mind, replied gaily: "If you permit me, I will except the Morels from your jurisdiction; you must allow me to take charge of these poor people, and above all, you must promise me not to return to that miserable house, for to tell you the truth, I live there."

"You, my lord? What a good joke!"

"Nothing more serious. A humble lodging, it is true—two hundred francs a-year; in addition to which, I allow the liberal sum of six francs a month to the portress, Madame Pipelet, that ugly old woman you saw; but to compensate for all this, I have for my neighbour Mademoiselle Rigolette, the prettiest grisette in the Quartieur du Temple; and you will agree that, for a merchant's clerk with a salary of only eighteen hundred francs (I pass as a clerk), such an abode is quite suitable."

"Your presence, so unhoped for in that fatal house, proves to me that you speak seriously, my lord. Some generous act leads you there, no doubt; but for what good work have you reserved me, then? What will be the part assigned me?"

"That of an angel of consolation, and—pardon me the vile expression—a demon of cunning and

stratagem! For if there are some delicate and painful wounds that the hand of a woman alone can soothe and heal, there are also unfortunate beings so haughty, so distrustful, and so hidden from observation, that it requires a rare penetration to discover them, and an irresistible charm to win their confidence."

"And when shall I be allowed to display this penetration, this ability that you imagine I possess?" impatiently asked Madame d'Harville.

"Soon, I trust, you will have to make a conquest worthy of you; but you must employ your most ingenious resources—you must be a very Machiavel."

"And when, my lord, will you confide to me this great secret?"

"Let me see; we have arranged the rendezvous: will you do me the favour to grant me an audience in four days?"

"So long?" said Clémence, innocently.

"But what would become of the mystery of the affair, and all the forms and appearances necessary to be kept up, if we were to meet earlier. Just imagine. If we were suspected as accomplices, we should be mistrusted; but I shall perhaps have occasion to write to you. What aged woman was that who brought me your letter this evening?"

"An old waiting-maid of my mother's; the very personification of confidence and discretion."

"It is to her then, that I will send my letters, and she will remit them to you. If you are kind enough to answer me, address: 'To M. Rodolph, Rue Plumet;' and let your maid put your letters in the post."

"I will do that myself, my lord, when taking my usual walk."

"Do you then often walk out alone?"

"When the weather is fine, almost every day."

"Admirable! It is a custom that all women should observe, from the first month of their marriage, as a provision against good or improper motives that may be imputed at any future time. It affords a *precedent*, as the lawyers say; and afterwards, these habitual promenades never give rise to dangerous interpretations. If I had been a woman (and, between ourselves, I should have been, I fear, at the same time very charitable and very trifling), the day after my marriage, I should have taken, quite innocently, the most mysterious steps; I would have ingeniously enveloped myself in situations the most compromising, in order to establish the *precedent*, as I have said, to the end that I might be at liberty to pay a visit to the poor, or to my lover."

"But this is such frightful perfidiousness, my lord," said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Happily for you, madame, you have never had occasion to admit the wisdom and utility of such foresight."

Madame d'Harville no longer smiled; she cast down her eyes, blushed deeply, and said, in a low and sad voice: "This is not generous, my lord!"

At first, Rodolph gazed on the marquise with astonishment, then resumed: "I understand you, madame; but once for all, let us view clearly your position with respect to M. Charles Robert. One day, we will suppose, a lady of your acquaintance shows you one of those pitiable-looking mendicants who roll their eyes languishingly, and play generally on the clarionet a desparing tune, to excite the pity of passers-by. 'That is undoubtedly a deserving man,' says your friend to you; 'he has at least seven children, and a wife blind, deaf, dumb, &c. &c.'—'Ah, poor fellow!' you exclaim, as you charitably relieve him; and every time you encounter the mendicant, as he sees you from afar, his eyes implore, his clarionet gives forth melancholy sounds, and your purse opens at this fresh appeal. One day, more and more pitying this unfortunate object, and urged by your friend, who treacherously abuses your confidence, you resolve to pay a charitable visit to your *deserving beggar*, in the midst of his misery. Well, you go; but, lo! you hear no longer a melancholy clarionet, no longer witness pitiful and imploring looks, but see a merry wag, jovial and rollicking, who sings the last new song while enjoying the good things of life. Instantly, contempt succeeds to pity, for you have mistaken an impostor for an honest man—nothing more or less. Is it not so?"

Madame d'Harville could not repress a smile at this singular apologue, and answered Rodolph: "However acceptable this justification may be, my lord, it appears to me too easy; for I dare not avail myself of so favourable a pretext as that of mistaken charity."

"It is, after all, only a noble and generous imprudence that you have committed; fortunately there remains too many ways of reparation to cause you much regret. But shall I not have the pleasure of seeing M. d'Harville this evening?"

"No, my lord; the scene of this morning affected him so strongly, that he is—suffering," said the marquise, in a low, tremulous tone.

"Ah, I understand," answered Rodolph, sadly. "Come, take courage; there needs but an aim, a motive, a means of directing your thoughts, as you were saying. Let me hope you will accomplish all this in the future I have marked out for you; then will your mind be so full of sweet consolations, that your resentment towards your husband will no longer find room in your heart; you will feel for him something of the interest you bear your dear child. And as to that little angel, now that I am acquainted with the cause of her sickly state, I dare almost bid you hope to overcome the dreadful malady with which she is afflicted."

"Oh, my lord!" cried Clémence, clasping her hands in gratitude. "How?—what mean you?"

"My household physician is a man little known, though very learned. Great part of his life was passed in America; and he has spoken to me of two or three cures performed by him on slaves afflicted with this distressing complaint."

"Ah, my lord, can it be possible?"

"Nay, do not hope too much: disappointment would be very cruel; but do not entirely despair."

Clémence d'Harville cast on the noble features of Rodolph a look of unspeakable gratitude. He was almost a king who had offered her consolation with so much intelligence, grace, and goodness; and she asked herself how she could possibly have ever felt an interest in such a being as M. Charles Robert. The very idea was horrible to her.

"What do I not owe to you, my lord!" said she, in a voice trembling with emotion; "you

reassure me; you cause me, in spite of myself, to hope for my child, and anticipate a new future which will prove at the same time a consolation and a pleasurable duty. Ah! was I not right when I wrote to you that, if you would kindly come here this evening, you would finish the day as you begun it—by performing a good action?"

"And add, at least, madame, one of those actions after my own heart, where there is so much that is attractive and charming in its performance. And now, farewell," said Rodolph, rising, as the clock struck half-past eleven.

"Farewell, my lord, and do not forget to let me have early news of those poor people in the Rue du Temple."

"I will see them to-morrow morning, for I had unfortunately forgotten that the lame boy had stolen your purse—and those unfortunate creatures are, perhaps, in deplorable want. In four days, remember, I shall come and explain the part you will have to undertake. I have to forewarn you, that a disguise, perhaps, will be unavoidable."

"A disguise?—oh, how delightful!—and of what kind, my lord?"

"I cannot at present explain; I will leave the choice to you."

* * *

"In order to save this excellent woman," said the prince, on his return home, "from perils similar to that which she has just escaped, it is but necessary to fill her mind with noble and generous thoughts, and, since an insurmountable aversion separates her from her husband, to arouse in her some romantic curiosity, some mysterious interest that shall serve to shield her from a new attachment."

CHAPTER IV.

MISERY.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that an unfortunate family, the father of which was a working jeweller, named Morel, occupied the garret of the house in the Rue du Temple. We will introduce our readers to this sad abode.

It was five o'clock in the morning. Without the silence was profound; the snow fell fast, and the sharp winter wind froze as it blew. A candle, supported by two bits of wood upon a square block, scarcely penetrated with its sickly, yellow light, the darkness of the garret—a narrow, low-built place, two-thirds of which was formed by the sloping ceiling, which communicated, by a sharp angle, with the flooring, and freely exposed the moss-covered tiles of the outer roof. Walls of plaster, blackened by time, and split into numerous crevices, displayed the worm-eaten laths which composed the frail division; while in one corner of this wretched habitation, a door off the hinges opened upon a narrow staircase. The floor, of a nameless colour, but foul, fetid, and slippery, was strewn here and there with bits of dirty straw, old rags, and bones, the residue of that unwholesome and vitiated food sold by the vendors of putrid meat, and frequently bought by starving wretches, that they may gnaw the few cartilages which still adhere.*

A condition so frightful either arises from misconduct, or from unavoidable misery—misery so great, so crushing and paralysing, as to enfeeble every energy, and render the object of it too despairing, too strengthless, even to attempt to extricate himself from his degraded state, and he crouches in his dirt and destitution like a beast in its den.

During the day, Morel's garret was lighted by a kind of long, narrow skylight contrived in the sloping roof, framed and glazed, and made to slide by means of a cord; but, at the hour of which we speak, a heavy fall of snow encumbered the window, and effectually excluded the light. The candle placed on Morel's working-table, which stood almost in the centre of the chamber, diffused a kind of circle of pale, sickly light, which, gradually diminishing, was at last lost in the shadow which overspread the place, through whose murkiness might be discerned the faint outline of several white-looking forms. On the work-table, which was merely a roughly-hewn block of oak, covered with grease and soot, lay, scattered about, a handful of rubies and diamonds, of more than ordinary size and brilliancy.

Morel was a worker of *real stones*, and not *false* ones, as he had given out, and as was thought by all in the house in the Rue du Temple. Thanks to this innocent deception, the costly jewels entrusted to him were supposed to be too valueless to tempt the cupidity of any one. Such riches, confided to the care of one so destitute as Morel, will render it unnecessary to say a word as to the honesty of his character.

Seated on a high stool without a bottom, and overcome by fatigue, cold, and hunger, after a long winter's night passed in unceasing labour, the lapidary had fallen asleep on his block, with his head upon his benumbed arms, and his forehead resting against a small grindstone, placed horizontally on the block, and generally put in motion by a little hand-wheel; a fine steel saw, and various other tools used in his trade, were lying near him. The artisan, of whom nothing but the bald skull, surrounded by a fringe of grey hairs, was visible, was dressed in an old, coarse jacket, without any garment between that and his skin, and a pair of thin trousers; while his worn-out slippers scarcely concealed the blue, cold feet, which rested on the floor. So bitter, so freezing was the wind which freely entered into this scarcely human dwelling, that, spite of the exhaustion of the overworked artisan, now plunged in an uneasy slumber, his frame shuddered and shivered with involuntary frequency. The great length of the wick of the unsnuffed candle told that Morel must have dozed for some time. No sound, save his heavy and irregular breathing, broke the death-like stillness that prevailed; for, alas! the seven other inhabitants of this garret did not sleep. Yes, in this narrow garret lived eight people—five children, of whom the youngest was four years old, and the eldest scarcely twelve; and then their sick, declining mother, with an aged grandmother, the parent of Morel's wife, now in her eightieth year, and an idiot. The cold must have been intense, since the natural warmth of eight persons, huddled into so small a space, could not affect the freezing atmosphere; for, to speak scientifically, but little *caloric* could be *given out* from their poor, weak, exhausted, shivering bodies, from the little infant to the grandmother. Except the father of the family, who had sunk from actual exhaustion, no one slept—no, because cold, sickness, and hunger denied them the sweets of

* In the more populous quarters of Paris, it is not uncommon to meet with persons who openly sell the flesh of animals born dead, and of such as have died of disease, &c.

repose. Little do the world know how rare and precious to the poor is sound and peaceful sleep, by which they repair their strength and forget their sorrows; it invigorates both mind and body, and the refreshed labourer returns to his rude toils, blessing the beneficent Giver of the all-healing balm!

In contrasting this picture of frightful misery with the value of the precious stones entrusted to the lapidary, we are struck with one of those comparisons which, while it afflicts, also elevates the mind. Constantly has this man before his eyes the heart-rending sight of the miseries of those so dear to him, oppressed by every evil, from cold and hunger to drivelling idiotcy, yet he still respects these jewels, a single one of which would snatch his wife and children from the privations which slowly devour them. Doubtless, he only does his duty—as an honest man; but because this duty is simple, is his performance of it the less great, the less admirable? There are circumstances in the practice of duty, which render its performance still more meritorious. This artisan, so unhappy, so tried, and all this treasure within his grasp, does he not represent an immense and formidable majority of men, who, doomed for ever to evils and privations, but peaceable, industrious, resigned, see every day, without hatred or envy, resplendent in their eyes, the magnificence of the wealthy? Is it not gratifying, is it not ennobling to reflect, that it is not force, it is not fear, but *sound moral sense*, which alone restrains this formidable popular ocean, the overflowing of which would swallow up society! Shall we then refuse to co-operate with all the powers of our mind and body, with those generous spirits, who ask but a little *sunshine* for so much misfortune, courage, and resignation?

* * *

Let us return to this sample—alas! too real—of distressing misery, which we shall portray in all its fearful reality.

The lapidary possessed but one thin mattress and a small piece of covering, which had fallen to the share of the idiot grandmother, who, in her wild and stupid selfishness, would not share her bed with any one. At the commencement of winter she had become furious, and had nearly strangled the youngest child, which they had placed to sleep beside her, a little girl of four years old, far gone in consumption, and who severely felt the cold on the straw palliasse, where she slept with her brothers and sisters. Hereafter, we will refer to this method of sleeping, so frequently adopted by poor people—in comparison with whom animals are treated luxuriously, for *their litter is changed*. Such was the picture which the garret of the artisan presented when the eye could penetrate the gloom beyond the feeble light of the candle. On the side of the wall, less damp than the other partitions, was placed on the ground the mattress where the old idiot reposed. As she could not bear her head covered, the shape of the skull and flat forehead was visible, her grey hair being cut quite close; while her thick eyebrows shaded the deep-set eye, from which a wild and savage brightness glanced; her cheeks, hollow, livid, and full of wrinkles, adhered to the sharp angles of her jaws. Lying on her side, huddled up, her knees nearly touching her chin, she shivered under a coverlid of grey wool, too small to entirely cover her, and leaving exposed her thin, emaciated legs and the bottom of an old, ragged petticoat, in which she was dressed. This bed exhaled a most repulsive and fetid odour.

At a short distance from the grandmother's mattress, still extending along the wall, was the palliasse which served as a sleeping-place for the five children, who were thus accommodated:—Two holes were cut crossways in the canvass covering, one at each end; then the children were slipt into the damp and musty straw, the cover of the palliasse serving both for sheets and counterpane. Two little girls, of whom one was seriously ill, shivered at one end, and three young boys at the other. All were dressed, if a few miserable rags can be called clothes. Masses of thick, fair hair, tangled and uncombed, which their mother suffered to grow long, as it insured them, as she fancied, a certain degree of warmth, half hid their pale and suffering faces. One of the boys, with numbed fingers, held the canvass up to his chin, the better to cover himself; while another, fearful of exposing his hands to the cold, held it between his teeth, which chattered in his head; and the third crept close to his brothers. The younger of the two girls, wasted by consumption, languidly reclined her poor little face, livid with the hues of death, upon the cold bosom of her sister, five years old, who tried in vain to warm her between her arms, watching over her with uneasy solicitude.

On another palliasse, at the end of the room, facing the children, the wife of the artisan was extended, exhausted by slow fever, and a painful disease, which had confined her to her bed for some months past. Madeleine Morel was six and thirty years of age; an old blue cotton handkerchief tied round her sunken forehead, showed more plainly the death-like paleness of her pinched, emaciated features. A dark circle surrounded her sunken and languid eyes; while her pale, wan lips were cracked and bleeding from the effects of the fever which was consuming her. Her countenance was sad and careworn; her insignificant features portrayed one of those mild dispositions, which, devoid of energy or decision, unable to struggle with misfortunes, yield at once, giving way to ceaseless lamentations and regrets. Weak, inactive, of limited capacity, she had remained honest, because her husband was so—left to herself, misfortune might have urged her to crime. She loved her children and her husband, but had neither courage nor resolution to restrain open and bitter complaints on their misfortunes; and frequently the lapidary, whose individual labour supported the whole family, was compelled to leave his work to console and pacify the poor invalid. Over an old, brown, coarse, ragged sheet which covered his wife, Morel, for greater warmth, had spread some rags, so old that the pawnbroker had refused them.

A stove, a saucepan, a broken-necked earthen jug, two or three cracked cups scattered here and there on the floor, a washing-stool and tub, and a large brown pitcher placed under the corner of the roof, near the unhinged door, which the wind constantly blew to and fro, these were all the household possessions of this family.

This gloomy picture, lighted up by a candle, whose flame, agitated by the freezing north wind that whistled through the tiles, sometimes cast its pale and flickering light on the wretched scene, and then would play on the heap of glittering jewels, making them sparkle with

a thousand brilliant lights, as they lay uncovered on the bench, where slept the lapidary.

Although the deepest silence reigned around, seven out of the eight unfortunate inhabitants of this garret were awake, and the eyes of each, from the grandmother to the youngest child, were instinctively fixed upon the lapidary, their only hope, their only resource. In their hungry, child-like selfishness they were uneasy to see him inactive, and borne down under the weight of labour. The mother thought of her children, the children thought of themselves, and the idiot appeared to think of nothing. Suddenly she sat upright in her bed, crossed upon her skeleton breast her long arms, yellow and withered as sear wood, rose slowly, and blinking as she stared at the light, moved stealthily along, trailing after her the rag of a coverlid, like a winding-sheet. She was very tall, and her closely shaven head appeared too small for her body; a kind of spasmodic motion agitated her thick and heavy under-lip. Altogether this hideous spectre presented the type of ferocious stupidity. The idiot advanced sullenly towards the bench, as a child who is about to commit a fault. As she came near the candle, she held towards the flame her two trembling hands—so thin, that as they shaded the light they appeared like a livid transparency. Madeleine Morel, from her lowly bed, followed the slightest movement of the old woman, who, while continuing to warm herself in the flame of the candle, dropped her head, and appeared to consider, with childish curiosity, the confusion of diamonds and rubies that sparkled on the table. Absorbed in their contemplation, the idiot allowed her hands to touch the flame of the candle, and she uttered a hoarse cry. At this noise, Morel awoke, and quickly raised his head. He was forty, with a countenance open, intelligent, and mild, but careworn and furrowed with misery; a grey beard of many weeks' growth, covered the lower part of his face, which was marked with the small-pox; his forehead, already bald, showed premature wrinkles, and his inflamed eye-lids were red with constant watching. One of those causes but too common among such of the working-classes as are compelled by their occupation to remain nearly all day in the same position, had bent his figure; constantly stooping over his board, and leaning on the right side, the better to use the grinding-stone, his naturally feeble frame had become, as it were, petrified, ossified in that position, where he remained from twelve to fifteen hours a day, till he was completely twisted on one side. His right arm also, from constant exertion at the grinding-stone, had gained a considerable muscular development; whilst the left arm and hand, always inactive and leaning on the board, the better to present the surface of the diamonds to be acted upon by the grinding-stone, was wasted frightfully; the feeble legs, almost useless for want of proper exercise, could scarcely support his debilitated body—as all substance, vitality, and strength seemed to be concentrated in that part alone which was constantly employed by labour. And often would poor Morel say, with touching resignation: "I care less to satisfy my hunger, than to strengthen the arm which turns the grinding-stone."

Waking suddenly, the lapidary found himself face to face with the idiot.

"What ails you? what do you want, mother?" said Morel. Then, in a lower tone, as if fearing to waken his family, whom he hoped might be asleep, he added: "Go to bed, mother; Madeleine and the children are sleeping."

"I am not asleep, father; I am trying to warm poor Adèle," said the elder of the little girls.

"I am too hungry to sleep," said one of the boys; "it was not my turn to have supper with Mademoiselle Rigolette last night."

"Poor children!" said Morel, sadly; "I hoped that, at least, you slept."

"I feared to wake you, Morel," said his wife, "or I should have asked for some water; I am very thirsty. My feverish feeling has come again."

"I will, directly," said the lapidary; "but first I must make your mother return to her bed. Look at her! Leave the jewels alone, will you?" said he to the old woman, who tried to grasp some large rubies whose brilliancy caught her attention. "Go to bed, mother," repeated he.

"There! there!" answered the idiot, pointing to the precious stones she coveted.

"I shall begin to be angry," said Morel, raising his voice to frighten the old woman, whom he gently pushed away with his hand.

"Gracious heaven, Morel, how I suffer from thirst!" murmured Madeleine. "Pray bring me some drink!"

"What would you have me do? I cannot allow your mother to touch the jewels, for she may lose another diamond, as she did last year; and God alone knows what we have already suffered through that loss, and what we may still have to endure!" As he uttered these words, the lapidary pressed his hand to his forehead with a gloomy air; then, turning to one of his children, he said: "Felix, give your mother some drink, as you are awake, and can attend to her."

"No, no, I will wait; he will take cold," answered Madeleine.

"I shall not be colder out of the palliasse than in it," said the boy, getting up.

"Come now, will you be quiet?" cried Morel, in an angry voice, trying to drive away the idiot, who would not leave the bench, and seemed resolved to snatch one of the jewels.

"Mother, the water in the pitcher is frozen!" said Felix.

"Break the ice then," said Madeleine.

"It is too thick; I cannot," answered the boy.

"Morel, do pray break the ice in the pitcher," said Madeleine, in an impatient and doleful voice; "since there is nothing else but water, surely I may at least have a draught of that. You would let me die of thirst!"

"Oh, my God, grant me patience! What do you wish me to do? I cannot leave your mother!" exclaimed the lapidary.

He could not, in truth, get rid of the idiot, who, being angry at the resistance she met with, uttered a sort of angry growl.

"Call her, then," said Morel to his wife; "she will sometimes attend to you."

"Mother, go to bed: and if you will be good, I will give you some of the nice coffee that you like so much."

"There! there!" repeated the idiot, trying this time to snatch violently at the rubies she so much fancied.

Morel kindly repulsed her, but in vain.

"Dear, oh dear! you know that, unless you frighten her with the whip, you cannot quiet her," said Madeleine.

"I must do so; but, although she is silly, it cuts me to the heart to threaten the poor old woman with the whip," said Morel.

Then, speaking to the idiot, who tried to bite him as he held her back with one hand, he said, in a loud and angry voice: "Beware of the whip! Go instantly to bed, or I will flog you!"

Then Morel took a whip from under the bench, and cracked it violently at the idiot, saying: "Make haste to bed! to bed directly!"

At the noise of the whip, the idiot hurried away from the work-bench; then stopping suddenly, she uttered a low, growling noise between her clenched teeth, and surveyed her son-in-law with looks of the deepest hatred.

"To bed! to bed!" repeated he, advancing, and again cracking his whip; while the idiot slowly regained her bed, shaking her fist at the lapidary.

Morel, anxious to terminate this scene, that he might give some drink to his wife, advanced close to the idiot, brandished and cracked his whip sharply, yet without touching her, repeatedly exclaiming: "To bed, instantly!"

The old woman, in her fright, began to howl horribly, threw herself upon the bed, and there squatted, like a dog in his kennel, still howling.

The frightened children, believing their father had struck the old woman, cried out: "Do not beat grandmother; do not beat her, father!"

It is impossible to describe the fearful effect of this nocturnal scene, accompanied by the supplicating cries of the children, the furious howlings of the idiot, and the mournful complaints of the suffering wife of the lapidary.

Poor Morel had but too frequently been compelled to be an actor in such scenes as that we have just described, yet, on the present occasion his patience and courage seemed to give way; and, throwing down the whip on his work-bench, he cried in accents of despair: "Oh, what a life! what a life!"

"Is it my fault, that my mother is an idiot?" said Madeleine, crying.

"And is it mine?" said Morel. "What do you expect of me?—that I should kill myself by labouring for you all. Night and day am I at work. I do not complain; so long as I have strength I will go on, but I cannot, at the same time, attend to my business, take care of the children, the idiot, and the invalid. No, heaven is not just—it is too much misery for one man to bear!" resumed the lapidary, in a desparing voice; and overpowered, he fell back on the stool, his face hidden in his hands.

"As they would not take my mother into the hospital, because she was not mad enough, what do you wish that I should do?" said Madeleine, in a low, complaining voice. "What is the use of tormenting yourself about that which you cannot prevent, and what good will it do?"

"None at all," rejoined the artisan, hastily brushing away the tears which despair had forced to his eyes; "none at all — you are right; but when everything seems against us, we cannot always control our feelings."

"Gracious God, how I suffer from thirst!" cried Madeleine. "I am parched with fever, and yet I shiver as if struck with death!"

"Wait an instant, and I will give you some drink." And so saying, Morel went to the pitcher which stood beneath the roof, and after having with difficulty broken the ice which covered the water, he filled a cup with the frozen liquid, and approached the bed-side of his wife, who stretched towards him her eager hands to receive it; but, after a moment's reflection, he said: "No, this will be too cold. The fever is at its height; it will do you harm."

"Will do me harm? So much the better; quick then—give it me quickly!" replied Madeleine, with bitterness; "it will the sooner end my misery: you will be rid of me then, and will only have to take care of the children and the idiot—the invalid, at least, will be gone."

"Why do you speak to me in that manner, Madeleine? You know I do not deserve it," said Morel, sadly. "Pray do not add wrong to vexation; I am content if I retain sufficient strength and reason to work. My head feels as though it were going amiss; it may fail me, and then what will become of you all? It is for you I speak: if I had only myself to think about, I should care little for to-morrow. Thank God, the river flows alike for all."

"Poor Morel," said Madeleine, deeply affected; "it is true, I am wrong to vex you by saying, I hope you may soon be rid of me. Do not believe me—I did not mean it; yet, after all, my intention was good, yes, for I am useless to you and the children. For these sixteen months past have I been bed-ridden. Oh, God! I am burning with thirst. Pray, pray let me drink!"

"You shall, you shall—but I was trying to warm the cup between my hands."

"How kind you are! and I to speak so harshly to you again!"

"Poor wife, your sufferings have soured your temper; say to me what you like, but do not again tell me you wish to leave me."

"But of what use am I to you?—of what good are our children to us, but to overload you with work?"

"True; yet, thanks to my love for you all, I find I have sufficient strength to work sometimes twenty hours a day, though it has, it is true, made me crooked and lame. Do you think that for myself alone I should slave as I do? Oh, no; life has not sufficient charms for that: if it were not for you, I would soon end it."

"And so would I," answered Madeleine; "but for the children, I should long since have said: 'Morel, let us light a pan of charcoal, and defy misery; but the children, the poor children!"

"Then you see, dear wife, the children are a real blessing to us, after all, since they save us from giving way to despair, and serve as a motive to exertion. Come, take your drink, but only by little mouthfuls, for it is still so very cold."

"Oh, thank you, Morel!" said Madeleine, drinking with avidity.

"Enough, enough!—you shall have no more!"

"It was too cold—my shivering increases," said Madeleine, giving him back the cup.

"Alas, alas! I told you it was. Now you will be very ill again."

"I have no longer strength to tremble. Merciful God! I feel as though I were wrapped in a sheet of ice!"

Morel took off his jacket, and laid it over his wife's feet, leaving himself entirely uncovered to the waist.

"Poor fellow!" sighed Madeleine. Ah! you are right; heaven is not just. What have we done, that we should endure such misery, while others ——"

"Every one have their troubles—the rich as well as the poor."

"Yes, the great have their troubles, it is true, but their stomachs are filled, and they do not

tremble with the cold. Then, when I think that, with the price of one of those diamonds you are polishing, we could procure for ourselves and children all the comforts of life, I shudder. And of what use are these diamonds to them?"

"If we were always to say: 'Of what use is this or that to others,' we may go great lengths. As well may we ask, of what use is it to the gentleman whom Madame Pipelet calls the Commandant, who has hired and furnished the first-floor in this house, when he never comes near it? Of what use is it to him to have therein good furniture, since he lodges elsewhere?"

"That is very true; there is more than sufficient to furnish many such humble rooms as ours. And then again, every day Madame Pipelet makes up a large fire, to prevent the goods from being spoiled by the damp. Only think, so much warmth thrown away, whilst we and our children freeze! But to all this you will reply: 'We are of no value.' Oh, these rich!—it seems very hard."

"No harder for us than for many others, Madeleine. But the rich do not see, and cannot know what misery is; they are born happy, they live happy, they die happy. Why then should they think of such wretches as ourselves? And then, I tell you, they cannot imagine such misery; how can they understand privations they never felt? If they are very hungry, so much the better; they will but the more enjoy their food. If it is very cold, so much the better; they say: 'How seasonable the weather is! what a delightful frost!' and it is all natural enough. They take a walk, and, on their return, they sit by a good fire, which they enjoy the more from having felt the severe cold; they, therefore, cannot feel much for us. As for them, cold and hunger are the cause of delightful enjoyments. So, you see, they cannot guess how much many suffer. In their situation we should do the same."

"Poor people are in that case better than the rich, since they assist one another. That kind girl, Mademoiselle Rigolette, who has so often nursed myself and the children, during our illness, last evening took Jérôme and Pierre to sup with her, and she has but little for supper—only a cup of milk and some bread. At her age the appetite is good; she must, therefore, deprive herself to give it to the children."

"Poor girl! she is, indeed, very good; and why?—because she has known what poverty is. As I always said, if the rich knew—if the rich only knew ——"

"And the lady who came yesterday, and appeared so alarmed, she asked if we wanted anything. Well now, she knows that we are in want, and will she, think you, come again?"

"I daresay she will, for though she appeared so frightened, she seemed very gentle and kind."

"Oh, with you, those that are rich are always in the right; I suppose they must be made of different clay to us!"

"I do not say that," said Morel; "I say, on the contrary, that if they have their faults, we too have ours. Unfortunately, they are not aware of half the misery that exists among the poor; and the misfortune is, that there are many agents employed to discover those who commit crimes, but there are none to seek those honest workmen, burdened with families, who are in extreme misery, and who, for the want of a little timely assistance, are tempted to do wrong. It is right to punish crime, but it would be better perhaps to prevent it. You remain honest, say for fifty years, but at last extreme misery and hunger urge you to evil—and then you become a rogue; whilst, if any one had known—— But of what use is thinking? the world is as it has always been. I am poor and hopeless, and therefore speak thus: if I were rich, I should talk of balls and fêtes, and all sorts of pleasure. But, my poor wife, how do you feel now?"

"Much the same; I have no sensation in my limbs. But how you tremble! put your jacket on again, and blow out the candle, which is burning to waste, for it is daylight."

In truth, a wan light, struggling through the snow that blocked up the strip of skylight, began to throw a mournful ray on the interior of this abode, making it appear more frightful still; for the shade of night had at least concealed part of its horrors.

"I shall wait now till it is light enough for me to resume my work," said the lapidary, seating himself on the corner of the palliasse by the side of his wife, and resting his forehead between his two hands.

After a short silence, Madeleine said to him: "When will Madame Mathieu come for the stones you are polishing?"

"This morning. I have but one false diamond to finish.

"A false diamond! and you only work on real stones, notwithstanding what the people in the house are led to believe!"

"Don't you remember——No, truly, you were asleep the other day when Madame Mathieu came about them. Well, you must know, she brought me ten false diamonds (Rhine crystals) to cut to the same size, and in the same manner, as the like number of real stones which she brought—those which are with the rubies. I never saw diamonds of purer water; those ten stones alone are certainly worth more than sixty thousand francs."

"And why does she want them imitated?"

"A lady of rank, to whom they belong, a duchess, I believe, has desired Mr. Baudoin, the jeweller, to sell her jewels, and replace them with false ones. Madame Mathieu, who supplies M. Baudoin, told me so, when she brought the real stones, that I might be particular in giving to the false ones the same cut and shape; she has employed four other lapidaries, for there were forty or fifty stones to cut, and I could not do them all, as they must be ready by this morning, to give M. Baudoin time to set them. Madame Mathieu says that many ladies do the same thing, and replace their diamonds with Rhenish crystals."

"You see then, that false stones have the same effect as real ones; yet those ladies who think only of adornment, never dream of sacrificing a diamond for the benefit of those as unhappy as ourselves."

"Poor wife, be more reasonable; grief makes you unjust. Who do you suppose knows that there are such people as the Morels in existence, much less that they are in want?"

"Oh, what a man! Were they to cut you in pieces, you would still give thanks."

Morel shrugged his shoulders with compassion.

How much will Madame Mathieu owe you this morning?" enquired Madeleine.

"Nothing, since I am in advance a hundred and twenty francs."

"Nothing! And did we not the day before yesterday spend our last farthing? We have not a fraction in the world!"

"That is true," said Morel, with a dejected air.

"And what are we to do?"

"I cannot tell."

"And the baker will no longer give us credit, will he?"

"No; yesterday I was obliged to borrow a loaf of bread of Madame Pipelet."

"Mother Burette, will she not lend us any thing?"

"Lend us! Now that she has all that belongs to us in pledge, what can she lend on? — our children?" said Morel, with a bitter smile.

"But my mother, yourself, and the children? you cannot die from starvation; and you had yesterday but part of a loaf between you all! But this is entirely your fault—you would not write this year to the board of charity."

"They only enter on the list, the names of those who possess furniture—and we have none; they consider us as living in a furnished room, and therefore, ineligible: besides, I must have gone backwards and forwards perhaps twenty times, and the loss of time would not have compensated for what they might have given, for, after all, what is it?—a loaf once a month, and half a pound of meat once a fortnight."*

"But then, what can you do?"

"Perhaps the lady who came yesterday will not forget us."

"You must not rely upon that. Surely Madame Mathieu will advance you a few francs. You have worked for her the last ten years; she cannot suffer an honest workman, with so large a family, to be in such utter want."

"I do not think she can lend us any thing. She did all she could in advancing by degrees the hundred and twenty francs; it is a large sum for her. Although she is a dealer in diamonds, and sometimes has by her jewels to the amount of forty thousand francs, still she is not rich; if she gains a hundred francs a month, she is quite satisfied—and she has two nieces to bring up. A few francs to her is almost as much, you see, as they are to us; and there are times when we have them not, as you know well. As I am so much in advance, I cannot ask her to take food from herself and those belonging to her, to give to me and mine."

"See what it is to work for agents instead of first-rate jewellers, who are sometimes more liberal! But you always eat the wool upon your back—it is all your fault ——"

"My fault!" exclaimed the unhappy man, exasperated by this cruel reproach; "is it not your mother who is the cause of all our miseries? If we had not been obliged to pay for the diamond she lost, we should have been beforehand—I should receive the full price of my labour, we should possess the eleven hundred francs that we drew from the savings-bank, to add to the thirteen hundred we borrowed from M. Jacques Ferrand—curses on him!"

"And you still persist in not asking him for assistance; to be sure, he is avaricious, and it might not be of use—but still one should always try, there can be no harm in that."

"Ask him!—ask charity of him!" cried Morel. "I would sooner be roasted to death before a slow fire! Cease speaking to me about that man, or you will drive me mad."

In saying these words, the countenance of the lapidary, usually calm and resigned, assumed an expression of gloomy energy; the blood rushed to his pale face, he rose suddenly from the palliasse on which he sat, and paced the room with an agitated step. In spite of his slight and deformed figure, the attitude and features of this man breathed a lofty indignation.

"I am not ill-disposed," cried he; "in my life I never injured any one; but this lawyer, I heartily wish him—I wish him—as much misery as he has caused me!" Then putting both hands to his head, he murmured, in a mournful tone: "Oh, my God! why does my evil destiny—which I do not deserve—deliver me and mine up, bound hand and foot, to that hypocrite? Has he the right to use his wealth to destroy, corrupt, and make desolate those whom he would devote to utter ruin?"

"That's right, that's right," said Madeleine, "go on with your abuse; it will do you so much good when he puts you in prison, as he can do at any time on that bill for thirteen hundred francs, on which he has obtained judgment against you three months since; he holds you as a bird in his net. I also detest that lawyer; but as we are dependent on him, we must ——"

"Let him seduce our daughter! Is it not so?" said the lapidary, in a voice of thunder.

"For heaven's sake, do not speak so loud; the children are awake—they will hear you!"

"Pshaw! pshaw! so much the better," answered Morel, with frightful irony; "it will be a good example to our two younger girls; it will prepare them, should the lawyer, at some future time, take a fancy to them. Are we not his dependents, as you constantly remind me? Let me hear you again repeat that he can put me to prison; come, speak frankly—we must give up our innocent child to him, is it not so?"

Then this unhappy man finished his imprecation in a burst of sobs; for his honest and good nature could not for any length of time sustain this tone of bitter sarcasm.

"Oh, my children!" cried he, in a flood of tears, "my poor, poor children, my Louise! my good and beautiful Louise! too, too beautiful, as from that springs all my misery. Had she not possessed such loveliness, this man would not have proposed to lend me the money. I am industrious and honest; the jeweller would have given me time; I should not have been under obligation to this hoary monster, and he could not have taken advantage of our poverty, to endeavour to seduce my daughter; for I should never have committed her to his care. But it must be. I dare not remove her; he has me in his power. Oh, misery, misery, what outrages do you not brook!"

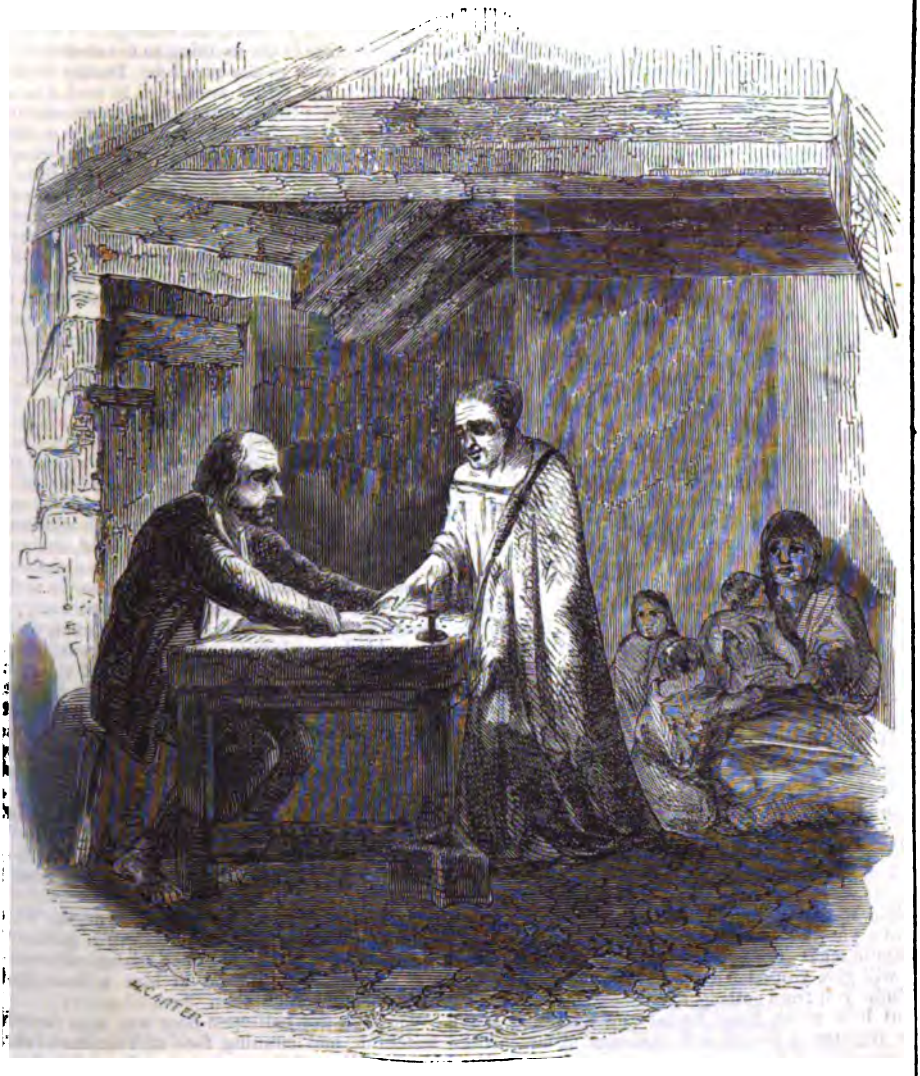
"But what can we do? He has told Louise: 'If thou leavest me, I will put thy father in prison.'"

"Yes, he already speaks to her as the lowest of the low."

"If it were only that, we might remedy the evil; but should she quit the service of the lawyer, he will take you away, and then, whilst you are in prison what will become of me, alone with my mother and children? Even if Louise could earn in another place twenty francs a month, how could we live upon that?"

"Yes! it is that we may exist, that Louise is exposed to dishonour!"

* Such are generally the proportions allowed by the charitable societies, owing to the great number of applicants for relief.



[Morel and the Idiot.]

"You always exaggerate: the lawyer is urgent, it is true—she tells us so; but she is virtuous, you well know."

"Oh, yes, she is virtuous, industrious, and good! When that diamond was lost, and seeing us in difficulty, she desired to go to service, in order not to be a burden upon us; but when I consented, what did it not cost me! She a servant, ill-treated, humbled!—she, so naturally proud, that you remember we laughed and called her 'the princess,' because she said, jestingly, that by neatness alone she would make our humble abode like a little palace. Dear child! it would have been my greatest happiness to keep her with us, though I had to work all day and all night too. And then, when I saw her lovely face and her pretty bright eyes gazing on me as I sat at my bench, and heard her sing—my labour was nothing! Poor Louise! so industrious, and so lively! Even your mother did all she wished her to do! But then, when she spoke to you, when she looked at you, it was impossible not to agree with her. And you, what care she took of you! What pains she would take to try and divert you from the thoughts of your suffering! And how tenderly she looked after her little brothers and sisters, finding time for everything! Ah, with dear Louise, all our peace and happiness—all—all left us!"

"Oh, Morel! do not recal the past to me—you will break my heart," said Madeleine, weeping bitterly.

"And when I think that perhaps this old monster—oh! the thought turns my brain—I feel inclined to go and first kill him, and then myself."

"And what should we do? Besides, then I tell you again, you exaggerate; the lawyer has perhaps only jested with Louise. Then, he goes to mass every Sunday, is often with the

priests; and many persons say it is safer to trust money in his care, than in the bank itself."

"What does that prove? That he is rich, and a hypocrite. I know Louise well—she is virtuous; but she loves us so dearly, that her heart bleeds for our misery. She knows that, without me, you would all die of hunger; and should the lawyer have threatened to imprison me, the poor child's mind may have been so wrought upon, that she may have been persuaded by that villain—on our account—to yield to—— Oh, God, my brain burns! I feel as though I should go mad!"

"But, if it should be so, the notary must have given her money and presents; and I am sure she would keep nothing for herself—she would have given us all."

"Silence, Madeleine! How can you, a mother, allow such thoughts of your child to find utterance? Louise bribed to infamy! Impossible! Shame on such thoughts!"

"But not for herself, but for us, she——"

"Silence! again I say, silence! You make me shudder. I do not know what would have become of you and my children, without me, if you can entertain such thoughts."

"What harm have I said?"

"Not any."

"Why then do you fear——"

The lapidary interrupted his wife hastily: "Because I have noticed, for the last three months, every time that Louise comes here, and when she embraces me, she blushes."

"Yes, with delight at seeing you."

"Or shame! She appears more and more sad."

"Yes, because she sees us more and more unhappy. Besides, when I spoke to her of the lawyer, she told me that now he no longer threatens to put you in prison."

"Yes, but at what price has he forgone his threats? She does not say that, and she blushes when she embraces me. It would be bad enough for a master to say to a poor, virtuous girl: 'Either yield to my wishes, and become what I would have you, or quit my house; and if any one should make inquiries of me as to your character, I will give you such a one as will effectually preclude you from getting a respectable situation;' but how much more brutal and unfeeling it is to frighten a young and innocent girl into the surrender of her virtue, by threatening to imprison her father, when the unfeeling monster who employs the threat, knows that on the labour of that father depend a helpless family for their daily bread! Oh, this is a thousand times more cruel, and is surely a crime unsurpassed in atrocity!"

"And when you reflect, that with one of the diamonds which lies there upon the bench, you could raise enough to repay the lawyer, take our daughter away, and keep her with us——" said Madeleine, slowly.

"What avails it, that you a hundred times repeat to me the same thing! Certainly, if I were rich, I should not be poor. Is that what you mean?" replied Morel, with mournful impatience; for honesty was so natural, so organic, so to speak, in this man, that it never entered his mind, that his wife, broken down, soured by misfortune, could have any bad intention, and wished to tempt his irreproachable rectitude. He therefore continued, bitterly: "We must be resigned. Happy are those who can have their children with them, and guard them from dangers; but the working girl, who will defend her?—no one. As soon as she is old enough to earn anything, she goes in the morning to her employment, and comes back in the evening. During the day the mother and father are forced to work too; so they have not the opportunity to watch over the conduct of their children: and then folks exclaim at the misconduct of those poor girls, as though their parents had the means of keeping them at home, or looking after their morals when they are out. Privations are nothing compared to the grief of leaving a wife, a child, or a parent. It is, above all, to us poor people that the affections of a family are salutary and consoling; and yet, as soon as our children can use their faculties, we are compelled to part with them."

At this moment a violent knocking was heard at the door of the garret.

CHAPTER V.

THE JUDGMENT.

Surprised, the lapidary rose and opened the door. Two men entered the garret. One of them was tall and thin, with a face mean and pimpled, surrounded by thick, greyish whiskers: he held in his hand a stout cane, leaded, and wore a shapeless hat and a large green great coat, covered with mud, and buttoned close up to the neck; the collar of black velvet, much worn, exposed to view his long and bare throat, which resembled a vulture's. This man was named Malicorne. The other was short and thick-set, his countenance equally mean, and his hair red. He was dressed with an attempt at finery, which was ridiculous. Brilliant buttons fastened the front of his shirt, whose cleanliness was more than doubtful; a long gold chain, passed across his plaid stuff waistcoat, was left to view by a velveteen jacket, of a yellowish grey colour. This man's name was Bourdin.

"Oh, what a stink of misery and death is here!" said Malicorne, stopping at the threshhold.

"The fact is, it does not smell of musk. What habits!" repeated Bourdin, making a gesture of disgust and disdain. He then advanced towards the artisan, who looked at him with mingled surprise and indignation.

Through the half-open door was seen the evil, watchful, and cunning face of Tortillard, who, having followed the strangers, unknown to them, was narrowly watching and listening attentively.

"What do you want?" said the lapidary, roughly, disgusted with the rudeness of the two men.

"Jérome Morel," responded Bourdin.

"I am he."

"Working jeweller."

"The same."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Once more, I am that person; you annoy me—what do you want? Explain, or leave the room!"

"Oh, you are coming the *bounce*, are you? I say Malicorne," said this man, turning towards his companion, "there is not too much here; it is not like what it was at the Viscount de Saint-Remy's."

"Yes, but when there is much, the door is shut against you, as we found in the Rue de Chatillon. The bird had watched the net, and would not be taken; while such vermin as these stick to their *cribs* like a snail to his shell."

"It is my opinion that they only require to be *squeezed*,* to cram themselves."

"Still the costs will be more than ever the *wolf*† will get here; however, that's his look-out."

"Hold!" said Morel, with indignation; "if you were not drunk, as you surely are, I should be very angry. Instantly leave the room!"

"How very sharp you are this morning, old hunchback!" cried Malicorne, insultingly alluding to the deformity in the person of the lapidary. "Do you hear, Malicorne, he has the impudence to call this place a *room*—a hole where I would not put my dog."

"For heaven's sake," cried Madeleine, so alarmed, that till then she had not spoken a word, "call for assistance; perhaps they are thieves. Take care of the diamonds."

In truth, seeing these two strangers, of doubtful appearance, approach nearer and nearer to the bench on which lay the jewels, Morel, fearing some evil intention, ran forward, and with his two hands covered the precious stones.

Tortillard, always on the watch, and listening, hearing the words of Madeleine, and seeing the movement of the artisan, said to himself: "They say he is a worker of false stones; if so, he would not fear their being stolen. Just as well to know that. Then again, Madame Mathieu, who comes here so often, is also a dealer in real; and those she has in her casket are real diamonds. I will tell this to La Chouette," added the son of Bras-Rouge.

"If you do not leave this room instantly, I will call the guard," said Morel.

The children, frightened at this scene, began to cry, while the old idiot started upright in her bed.

"If any one has a right to call the guard, it is we. Do you hear, Mister Sideways?" said Bourdin.

"You shall see that the guard will lend a hand to take you, if you don't go quietly," added Malicorne; "we have not the magistrate with us, it is true; but if you wish to enjoy his society, you shall have a taste of one, just out of his bed, quite hot and heavy. Bourdin will go and fetch him."

"To prison!—me?" cried Morel, struck with stupor.

"Yes, to Clichy."

"To Clichy!" repeated the artisan, with a wild look.

"Is he hard of hearing?" asked Malicorne.

"Well then, to the debtors' prison, if you like that better," said Bourdin.

"You—you—are—can it be——the lawyer? Oh, my God!"

And the artisan, pale as death, fell back on his stool, unable to utter another word.

"We are the officers who are to take you, if we can; do you understand now, old fellow?"

"Morel, it is for the bill in the hands of Louise's master! We are all lost!" said Madeleine, with a sorrowful voice.

"This is the judgment," said Malicorne, taking from his dirty pocket-book a stamped writ.

After having mumbled over, in the usual way, a part of this document, in a voice hardly intelligible, he pronounced distinctly the last words, unfortunately too well understood by the artisan:—

"*As final judgment, the tribunal condemns Jérome Morel to pay to Pierre Petit-Jean, merchant,* by all his goods, and even with his body, the sum of thirteen hundred francs, with interest, dated from the day of the protest; and he is besides condemned to pay all other and extra costs. Given and judged at Paris, the 30th of September, &c. &c.*"

"And Louise, then? Louise!" cried Morel, almost distracted, without appearing to have heard what had just been read. "Where is she? She has then left the lawyer, since he sends me to prison. Louise! my child! what has become of her!"

"Who is this Louise?" said Bourdin.

"Let him alone," said Malicorne. "Don't you see he's coming the artful?" Then, approaching Morel, he added: "Come, right, face about, march; I want to breathe the air, I am poisoned here!"

"Morel, do not go!" said Madeleine, wildly. "Kill them, the thieves! Oh, you are a coward! You will let them take you, and abandon us to our fate."

"Act as though you were at home, madame," said Bourdin, sarcastically; "but if your husband lifts his hand against me, I will give him something to remember it by," continued he, swinging his loaded stick round and round.

Occupied solely with the thoughts of Louise, Morel heard nothing of what was said. Suddenly, an expression of bitter joy lighting up his face, he cried out: "Louise has quitted the lawyer's house. I shall go to prison with a light heart!" But then, glancing round him, he exclaimed: "But my wife, and her mother, and my poor children, who will support them? They will not trust me with stones, that I might work in prison; for it will be supposed that my own misconduct has sent me there. Does this lawyer desire the death of all of us?"

"Once for all, let us be off!" said Bourdin; "I am sick of all this. Come, dress yourself, and march."

"My good gentlemen, forgive what I have just said to you," cried Madeleine, still in bed: "you will not have the cruelty to take away Morel; what do you think will become of me, with my five children and my idiot mother? There she is, huddled up on her mattress. She is foolish, my good gentlemen; she is quite out of her mind."

"The old woman that is shorn?"

"Sure enough she is shorn," said Malicorne; "I thought she had on a white scull-cap."

"My dear children, throw yourselves at the feet of these two gentlemen," said Madeleine, hoping, by a last effort, to soften the bailiffs; "entreat them not to take away your poor father—our only hope." But in spite of the order of their mother, the children, frightened and crying, dared not leave their beds.

At the unusual noise, and the sight of the two bailiffs, whom she did not know, the idiot began to utter deafening howls, crouching herself against the wall. Morel appeared careless to all that was passing around him; the blow was so frightful, so unexpected, the consequences of this arrest appeared so terrible, that he could scarcely believe in its reality. Already weakened by privations of every description, his strength failed him; he remained pale and haggard, seated on his stool, as though incapable of speech or motion, his head drooping on his breast, and his arms hanging listlessly down.

* Imprisoned. † Creditor.

* The crafty notary, incompetent to proceed in his own name, had got from the unfortunate Morel a blank acceptance, and had introduced the name of a third party.

"Ah! thousand thunders! when will all this end?" cried Malicorne; "think you that we came here for fun? Off with you, or I shall be obliged to make you!" So saying, the bailiff put his hand on the shoulder of the artisan, and shook him roughly. The threat, the action, alarmed the children; the three little boys left their palliasse half naked, and came in an agony of tears, to throw themselves at the feet of the bailiffs, and, with clasped hands, cried, in tones of touching earnestness: "Pray, pray do not kill our father!"

At the sight of these unhappy children, shivering with cold and fear, Bourdin, in spite of his natural callousness, and the constant sight of scenes like the present, felt something akin to compassion; his companion, unpitying, brutally disengaged his leg from the grasp of the kneeling supplicants.

"Hands off, you young ragamuffins! A pretty business ours would be, truly, if we had always to do with such beggars!"

A fearful addition was made to the horrors of this scene. The elder of the little girls, who had remained in the palliasse with her sick sister, cried out: "Oh, mother, mother! I do not know what is the matter with Adèle! She is quite cold, and she stares so at me; yet she does not breathe!"

The poor, consumptive child had just quietly expired, without a murmur, her looks resting on her sister, whom she tenderly loved.

No language can describe the heart-rending cry of anguish uttered by the wife of the lapidary, at this frightful announcement, for she understood all. It was one of those stifling, convulsive screams, torn from the depth of a mother s heart.

"My sister seems as though she were dead!" continued the child. "Oh, how she frightens me! She still looks at me, but how cold her face is!" Saying this, the poor child suddenly rose from the side of her dead sister, and, running terrified, threw herself into the arms of her mother; while the distracted parent, forgetful that her paralysed limbs were incapable of sustaining her, made a violent effort to rise, and run towards the corpse of her child; but her strength failed her, and she fell on the floor, uttering a last cry of despair. That cry found an echo in the heart of Morel, and roused him from his stupor; with one step he reached the side of the palliasse, snatching from it his child, four years old. She was dead. Cold and want had hastened her end, although her complaint, brought on by the want of common necessaries, was beyond cure. Her poor little limbs were already cold and stiff. Morel, his grey hair almost standing on end with despair and fright, remained motionless, holding his dead child in his arms, whom he contemplated with fixed, tearless eyes, bloodshot with agony.

"Morel! Morel! give my Adèle to me!" shrieked the unhappy mother, holding out her arms towards her husband; "it is not true that she is dead; you shall see—I will warm her in my arms!"

The curiosity of the idiot was excited by the haste with which the two bailiffs approached the lapidary, who would not part with the body of his infant. The old woman ceased to howl, rose from her bed, slowly approached Morel, and passing her hideous and stupid face over his shoulder, gazed vacantly on the corpse of her grandchild. The features of the idiot retained their usual expression of ferocity. After a little time, she uttered a sort of hoarse, hollow groan, like that of a hungry beast, and, returning to her bed, she threw herself upon it, crying out: "Hunger, hunger!"

"You see, gentlemen, this poor little girl, just four years old—Adèle; yes, she was named Adèle. It was only last night that she fondly returned my caresses—and now—look at her! You will perhaps say that I have one less to feed, and that I ought not to repine," said the artisan, with a haggard look.

The poor man's reason began to waver under so many repeated shocks.

"Morel, I want my child; I will have her!" said Madeleine.

"True, true," replied the lapidary; "each in turn; that is but fair." And he went and laid the child in the arms of his wife. Then, hiding his face between his hands, he groaned bitterly. Madeleine, almost as frenzied as her husband, laid the child in the straw of her palliasse, and watched it with a sort of savage jealousy; while the other children were kneeling round in tears.

The bailiffs, for a moment softened by the death of the child, soon returned to their accustomed brutality of conduct.

"Well, well, my friend," said Malicorne to the lapidary, "your child is dead; it is unfortunate, but we are all mortal; we cannot help it, nor can you, so there's an end of it. We have some particular business to do to-day—a *swell* to grab, so come along, there's a good fellow."

Morel did not hear what the man said. Completely lost in mournful contemplation, the artisan said to himself, in a hollow and broken voice: "It will be necessary to bury my poor little girl—to watch her here till they come to carry her away, to lay her in the cold, cold ground. But how?—we have nothing. And the coffin!—who will give us credit? Oh, a little coffin, for a child of four years old, ought not to cost much! And then we shall want no bearers! One will carry it under his arm! Ha! ha! ha!" added he, with a frightful burst of laughter, "how happy I am! She might, perhaps have lived to be eighteen, the age of Louise, and no one would have given me credit for a large coffin!"

"Egad, this man seems as though he would lose his senses!" said Bourdin to Malicorne. "Look at him; he quite frightens me! and the old idiot, how she howls with hunger! What a queer lot!"

"We must however make a finish," answered Malicorne; "although the arrest of this beggar is only for seventy-six francs, seventy-five centimes, it is only right that we should swell the costs to two hundred and forty or fifty francs. It is the *wolf* who pays."

"You mean, who has to *fork out*; for this poor devil here will have to pay the fiddler, since it is he that must dance."

"By the time he has paid his creditor two thousand five hundred francs, for principal, interest, costs, and all, it will be warm work."

"It will not be then as it is now, for it freezes," said the bailiff, blowing his fingers. "Come, old fellow, pack up, and let us be off; you can blubber as you go along. Who the devil can help the young-un's kicking the bucket!"

"Besides, when people are so poor, they have no right to have children."

"This will be a lesson for him," added Malicorne. Then, slapping Morel on the shoulder, he continued: "Come, come, old boy, we can

wait no longer; since you cannot pay, off to prison with you!"

"To prison!" said a kind and youthful voice; "Morel to prison!" And a young girl, a bright, rosy brunette, suddenly entered the garret.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Rigolette!" said one of the children, crying, "you are so good! Save poor father; they want to take him to prison, and our little sister is dead."

"Adèle dead!" exclaimed the young girl, whose large, brilliant black eyes were veiled in tears. "Your father to prison? This cannot be." And, almost stupefied with surprise, she looked alternately at the lapidary, his wife, and the bailiffs.

"My pretty girl," said Bourdin, approaching Rigolette, "you must try to make this poor man listen to reason; his little girl is dead, but nevertheless he must come with us to Clichy—to the debtor's prison. We are sheriffs' officers."

"It is, then, all true?" said the young girl.

"Quite true. The mother has the little one in her bed—they cannot take it from her; and while she is hugging it there, the father ought to take the opportunity of going away with us."

"My God, my God! what misery!" said Rigolette. "What is to be done?"

"Pay, or go to prison! there is no other way—unless you have notes for two or three thousand francs to lend them," said Malicorne, in a careless tone; "if you have them, *fork out*, and we will *cut*, devilish glad to get away."

"Oh, this is frightful!" said Rigolette, with indignation; "daring to jest with such dreadful misfortunes!"

"Well then, joking aside," replied the other bailiff, "if you would do some good, endeavour to prevent the woman from seeing us take away her husband. You will thus save each of them a very disagreeable quarter of an hour."

The advice was good, though coarsely given; and Rigolette, following it, approached Madeleine, who, distracted with grief, did not appear to notice the young girl, as she knelt down beside the bed with the children.

Meanwhile Morel had only recovered from his temporary delirium to sink under the most painful reflections; for having become somewhat calm, he could view far too clearly the horror of his situation. The notary must be pitiless, since he had gone to such extremity; and the bailiffs did but do their duty. The artisan was therefore resigned.

"Come, come, let's be marching; if you don't go by fair means, you must by foul," said Bourdin to him.

"I cannot leave these diamonds here, my wife is half mad," said Morel, pointing to the stones that were scattered upon the bench. "The person for whom I work will come for them this morning, or in the course of the day. They are very valuable."

"Good!" said Tortillard, who still remained near the half-open door; "good, good! Chouette shall know that."

"Grant me only till to-morrow," urged Morel, "that I may restore the diamonds."

"Impossible! We must go immediately."

"But I cannot; by leaving the diamonds here, I run the risk of their being lost or stolen."

"Take them with you; a coach waits at the door, which you will have to pay for with the other expenses. We can call on the owner of the stones; if he is not at home, you can place them in the registry at Clichy; they will be as safe there as in the bank. Come, make haste; we will slip away before your wife or children are aware of it."

"Grant me only till to-morrow, so that I may bury my child!" entreated Morel, with a supplicating voice, half stifled with the anguish he endeavoured to restrain.

"No! we have already lost more than an hour in waiting here."

"This burying still worries you then?" added Malicorne.

"Oh, yes! it makes me sad," said Morel, with bitterness; "you so much fear to grieve people. Well, then, a last farewell!"

"There, again! confound you, make haste!" said Malicorne, with brutal impatience.

"Since when have you had the order to arrest me?"

"The judgment has been signed four months since; but it was only yesterday that our officer received instructions from the lawyer to put it in execution."

"Yesterday! And why was it delayed so long?"

"How can I tell? Come, pack up."

"Yesterday! and Louise not here! Where can she be! what has become of her!" said the lapidary, taking from the bench a card-box filled with cotton, in which he arranged the jewels. "But, never mind that; in prison, I shall have plenty of time for thinking."

"Come, pack up the clothes you are going to take with you, and make haste and dress yourself."

"I have no clothes to pack up; I have only these diamonds to take away, and place in the registry of the prison."

"Well then, dress yourself."

"I have no other clothes than these."

"You are going out in these rags?" said Bourdin.

"You will be ashamed of me, doubtless," said the lapidary, bitterly.

"No, it is of no consequence, since we go in your coach," answered Malicorne.

"Father, father!" said one of the children, "mother is calling you."

"You hear?" muttered Morel, rapidly, appealing to one of the bailiffs; "do not be inhuman; grant me a last favour. I have not the courage to say farewell to my wife and children; it would break my heart. If they see you take me away, they will run after me, and I would avoid that. I therefore beg of you to say aloud that you will return in three or four days, and pretend to go away; you can wait for me on the landing below; I will come to you in less than five minutes. That will spare me the misery of saying farewell. I will no longer resist, I promise you. I shall go stark mad; I was nearly so, just now."

"I understand—you want to give us the slip!" said Malicorne, "you would bolt, old sharpshins!"

"Oh, my God! my God!" cried Morel, with mournful indignation.

"I do not think he intends to chouse us," said Bourdin, in a low tone to his companion; "let us do as he wishes, or we shall never have him. I will wait outside the door; there is no other outlet from the garret—he cannot escape us."

"Very well; but he needn't be so particular about leaving the mucky crib. Why he's going to a palace compared with it!" Then, addressing Morel in a low voice, he said: "Now then,

be quick, and we will wait for you below. Make haste, and offer some pretence for our going."

"I thank you," said Morel.

"Very well, it shall be so," said Bourdin, in a loud voice, and looking significantly at the artisan; "in such case, and as you promise to pay in a short time, we will leave you for the present, and call again in four or five days; but then you must be punctual."

"Yes, gentlemen, I trust I shall then be able to pay you."

The bailiffs left the room; while Tortillard, for fear of being seen, had disappeared down the staircase, at the same time the bailiffs quitted the garret.

"Madame Morel, do you hear?" said Rigolette, trying to withdraw the attention of the mother from her melancholy abstraction; "they will not take away your husband—those two men are gone."

"Mother, do you not hear? they will not take father away," said the eldest of the boys.

"Morel, listen to me," murmured Madeleine, in a state of dilirium. "Take one of the large diamonds and sell it—no one will know it, and we shall be saved. Our Adèle will no longer feel cold; she will not be dead."

Taking advantage of a moment when none belonging to him were observing his actions, the lapidary cautiously left the room. The bailiff was waiting for him upon a sort of little landing, covered only by the roof. Upon this landing opened the door of a loft, which had formerly been part of the garret occupied by the Morels, and in which M. Pipelet kept his stock of leather; and the worthy porter called this place his *melo-dramatic cabinet*, because, by means of a hole made in the wall between two laths, he was sometimes a witness to the sad scenes that passed in the room of the Morels. The bailiff noticed the door of the loft; in a moment, he thought that most likely his prisoner had reckoned upon that outlet for escape, or to hide himself.

"Come, march, old fellow!" said he, beginning to descend the stairs, and making a sign to the lapidary to follow.

"One minute more, I beseech!" said Morel; and he fell on his knees upon the floor. Through a chink in the door, he threw a last look upon his family, and joining his hands, he uttered, in a low, heart-rending voice, while tears flowed down his haggard cheeks: "Farewell, my dear children—my poor wife! may heaven preserve you all! Farewell!"

"Make haste and finish your preaching," said Bourdin, brutally. "Malicorne is quite right; you needn't make so much fuss about leaving the stinking kennel. What a place! what a place!"

Morel rose to follow the bailiff, when the words "Father! father!" sounded on the staircase.

"Louise!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his hands towards heaven; "I can then clasp you in my arms before I go!"

"I thank thee, my God, that I am in time!" said the voice, approaching nearer and nearer, and light steps were heard rapidly ascending the stairs.

"Be calm, my dear," said a third voice, sharp, asthmatic, and out of breath, coming from a lower part of the house; "I will lay in wait, if it be necessary, in the alley, with my broom and my old man, and they shall not leave here till you have spoken to them, the contemptible beggars!"

The reader has doubtless recognised Madame Pipelet, who, less nimble than Louise, followed her slowly. In an instant after, the daughter of the lapidary was in the arms of her father.

"It is indeed you, Louise! my darling Louise!" said Morel, crying; "but how pale you are! For mercy's sake, my child, what ails you?"

"Nothing, nothing, father," answered Louise, much agitated; "I have run so fast. Here is the money!"

"How is this?"

"You are free!"

"You know, then?"

"Yes, yes! Here, sir, take the money," said the young girl, giving a rouleau of gold to Malicorne.

"But this money, Louise—this money?"

"You shall know all presently; don't be uneasy. Come and comfort my dear mother."

"No, not now!" exclaimed Morel, placing himself before the door, remembering that Louise was still in ignorance of the death of the little girl; "wait, I must speak to you about this money."

"Stay!" said Malicorne, as he finished counting the gold, and while putting it in his pocket: "Sixty-four, sixty-five—that will just make thirteen hundred francs. Have you no more than that, my little dear?"

"But you only owe thirteen hundred francs!" said Louise, addressing her father, with a stupefied air.

"I do not," said the lapidary.

"Stop!" rejoined the bailiff; "the bill is for thirteen hundred francs. Well then, the bill is paid; but the expenses? Without the execution, they are already eleven hundred and forty francs."

"Gracious heaven!" cried Louise, "I thought it was only thirteen hundred francs! But, sir, we will very soon pay you the remainder; this is a pretty good sum on account—is it not, father?"

"Soon!—very well; bring the money to the office, and we will then let your father go. Come, let us be off!"

"You will take him away?"

"Positively. This is on account. When the rest is paid, he will be free. Go on, Bourdin; let us get out of this!"

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked Louise.

"Ah, what a scene! here it is—the old thing over again; it is enough to make one sweat in the depth of winter—on my honour!" said the bailiff, in a brutal tone. Then advancing towards Morel, he continued: "If you do not come along at once, I will take you by the collar, and bundle you down. This wind-up is beastly!"

"Oh, my poor father! when I had hoped to save him!" said Louise, overwhelmed.

"No, no, hope nothing for me! God is not just!" cried the lapidary, in a voice of deep despair, and stamping his feet with rage.

"Yes, God is just! He always has pity, and watches over the good who suffer!" said a soft yet manly voice.

At the same instant, Rodolph appeared at the door of the little recess, from whence he had, unseen, witnessed the greater part of the scenes we have just related. He was very pale, and deeply moved. At this sudden interposition, the bailiffs drew back with surprise; while Morel

and his daughter looked at the prince vacantly. Taking from his pocket a small parcel of folded bank-notes, Rodolph selected three, and, giving them to Malicorne, said to him: "Here are two thousand five hundred francs; give back to this young girl the money you just received from her."

More and more surprised at this singular interference, the bailiff took the notes, hesitatingly, examined them very suspiciously, turning them over and over, and finally pocketed them; but, as his alarm and surprise began to subside, so did his natural coarseness return, and eyeing Rodolph from head to foot with an impertinent stare, he exclaimed: "Your notes are good; but how came you with so large a sum? I hope, at least, it is your own!" added he.

Rodolph was very humbly dressed, and covered with dust—thanks to his stay in M. Pipelet's loft.

"I have desired you to restore that gold to the young girl," answered Rodolph, in a quick, stern voice.

"I have *desired* you!" and, pray, why do you desire me?" cried the bailiff, advancing towards Rodolph in a threatening manner.

"The gold! the gold!" said the prince, seizing the wrist of Malicorne, and grasping it so violently, that he winced under the iron hold, and cried out: "Oh! but you hurt me! Hands off, if you please."

"Restore the gold then! you are paid. Take yourself off, without further insolence, or I will throw you to the bottom of the staircase."

"Very well; here is the gold," said Malicorne, giving it to the young girl; "but mind what you are about, young man—don't fancy you are going to do as you like with me, because you happen to be the strongest."

"That's right. Who are you, that you give yourself such airs?" said Bourdin, sheltering himself behind his companion. "Who are you?"

"Who is he? Ill-mannered beggars that you are! he is my tenant, the king of tenants, you foul-mouthed wretches!" cried Madame Pipelet, who appeared at last, quite out of breath, still wearing the Brutus wig, and holding in her hand an earthen pot filled with boiling soup, which she was kindly taking to the Morels.

"What does that old polecat want?" said Bourdin.

"If you dare to make any of your blackguard remarks about me, I'll make you feel my nails—and my teeth too, if necessary!" screamed Madame Pipelet; "and more than that, my lodger, my prince of lodgers, will pitch you from the top to the bottom of the staircase, and I will sweep you away like a heap of rubbish, as you are!"

"That old woman will excite all the people in the house against us. We are paid, and our expenses also; let us be off!" said Bourdin to Malicorne.

"Here are your documents," said the last-named individual, throwing a bundle of papers at the feet of Morel.

"Pick them up, and deliver them properly! You are paid for being civil," said Rodolph, seizing the bailiff with his vigorous hand, while with the other he pointed to the papers.

Convinced by this new and formidable grasp, that he could not struggle against so powerful an adversary, the bailiff stooped down grumbling, picked up the bundle of papers, and gave them to Morel, who took them mechanically. Hardly able to credit his senses, the poor lapidary believed himself under the influence of a dream.

"As for you, young fellow, although you have an arm as strong as a porter's, never come under our lash!" said Malicorne; and shaking his fist at Rodolph, he nimbly jumped down the stairs, followed by his companion, who looked behind him with fear; while Madame Pipelet, burning for revenge on the bailiffs, for the insult offered to Rodolph, looked at her saucepan with an air of inspiration, and then cried out heroically: "Morel's debts are paid; they will now have plenty to eat, and will no longer stand in need of my soup—take care below!" and leaning over the banisters, the old woman emptied the contents of her saucepan on the backs of the bailiffs, who had just arrived at the first-floor landing.

"Ah, you are caught, then!" added the portress. "They are soaked through like sops—like two sops! He! he! he! this is capital!"

"A thousand million thunders!" cried Malicorne, wet through with Madame Pipelet's culinary preparation. "Will you take care what you are about up there, you old baggage!"

"Alfred!" retorted Madame Pipelet, bawling in a voice sharp enough to split the tympanum of a deaf man. "Alfred! have at 'em, old darling! They wanted to behave improperly to thy 'Stasie! (Anastasie). Those rascals! they would take liberties with me! Strike at them with your broom! call the oyster-woman, and the man next door to help you. Quick!—quick!—after them! The cat!—the cat!—thieves! Hish!—hish!—hish! Bravo! Halloo!—strike above, old darling! Broom!—broom!" And by way of a formidable finish to these hootings, which she had accompanied with a violent stamping of her feet, Madame Pipelet, carried away by the intoxication of her victory, hurled from the top to the bottom of the staircase her earthenware saucepan, which, breaking with a loud, crashing noise, at the moment that the bailiffs, stunned by the frightful cries, were descending the stairs with long and hasty strides, added greatly to their fears.

"Ha! ha! you have caught it then! Now take yourselves off! I think you have got enough for once!" cried Anastasie, laughing loudly, and crossing her arms in an attitude of triumph.

While Madame Pipelet was thus venting her rage upon the bailiffs, Morel, overcome with gratitude, had thrown himself at the feet of Rodolph.

"Ah, sir, you have saved our lives! To whom do we owe this unlooked-for succour?"

"'*To* HIM *who watches over and protects honest men*,' as your immortal Béranger says."

CHAPTER VI.

RIGOLETTE.

LOUISE, the daughter of the lapidary, was possessed of a remarkable loveliness of person; tall and graceful, she resembled the classic beauty of Juno for the regularity of her features, and the huntress Diana for the lightness and elegance of her figure. In spite of her sunburnt complexion, despite her rough and freckled hands, beautifully formed, but hardened by domestic labour, in spite of her humble garments, this young girl possessed a nobility of exterior which nature often

refuses to those of high birth, and sometimes bestows upon the lowly born.

We will not attempt to describe the gratitude and joyful surprise of this family, so wondrously snatched from a fearful fate; in the first burst of happiness, even the death of the little girl was forgotten. Rodolph alone remarked the extreme paleness of Louise, and the utter abstraction with which she seemed oppressed, in spite of the deliverance of her father. Wishing to completely satisfy the Morels as to apprehensions about the future, and to explain a liberality which might otherwise betray suspicions as to the character he thought proper to assume, Rodolph said to the lapidary, whom he took to the landing, while Rigolette prepared Louise to receive the news of her sister's death, and said to him: "Yesterday morning, a young lady came to see you."

"Yes, sir, and appeared much distressed at the situation in which she found us."

"It is to her you must return thanks, and not to me."

"Is it, indeed, true, sir? That young lady ——"

"Is your benefactress. I have often waited upon her with goods from our warehouse. The day before yesterday, while I was here, engaging an apartment on the fourth-story, I learnt from the portress your cruel position. Knowing the charity of this lady, I went to her. She came, so that she might herself judge of the extent of your misfortunes, with which she was painfully moved; but as your situation might be the result of misconduct, she begged of me, as soon as possible, to make some inquiries respecting you, as she was desirous of apportioning her benefits according to your deserts."

"Good and excellent lady! I had good reason to say ——"

"As you observed to Madeleine: 'If the rich knew;' is it not so?"

"How, sir!—you know the name of my wife! Who told you that?"

"Since six o'clock this morning," said Rodolph, interrupting Morel, "I have been concealed in the little loft which adjoins your garret."

"You, sir!"

"Yes, and I have heard all that passed, my excellent and honest man."

"Oh, sir! but how came you there?"

"Whether good or bad, I could employ no better means of getting at your real character and sentiments. I wished to see and hear all, without your knowledge. The porter had spoken to me of this little place, and offered it to me, that I might keep my wood in it. This morning I requested him to permit me to visit it; I remained there an hour, and I feel convinced, that there does not exist a character more worthy, noble, and courageously resigned than yours."

"Nay, sir, indeed I cannot see much merit in my conduct: I was born honest, and cannot act otherwise than I have done."

"I know it; and for that reason I do not praise your conduct, but appreciate it. I had quitted the loft, to release you from the bailiffs, when I heard the voice of your daughter. I wished to leave to her the pleasure of saving you; unhappily the rapacity of the bailiffs prevented poor Louise from enjoying so sweet a delight. I then made my appearance. Fortunately, I yesterday recovered several sums of money that were due to me, and I was able to make an advance to your benefactress, by paying for you this unfortunate debt. But your misfortunes are so great, so unmerited, and so nobly sustained, that the interest we feel for you, and that you deserve, will not stop here. I can, in the name of your preserving angel, assure you of a future repose, with happiness to you and yours."

"Is it possible? But at least tell me her name, sir — the name of this preserving angel, as you have called her."

"Yes, she is an angel; and you have still reason to say that 'great and little have their troubles.'"

"Is this lady, then, unhappy?"

"Who is there without their sorrows? But I see no cause to withold her name. This lady is called ——"

Remembering that Madame Pipelet knew that Madame d'Harville had come to her house to inquire for the commandant, Rodolph, fearing the indiscreet gossiping of the portress, said, after a moment's reflection: "I will tell you the name of this lady, on this condition ——"

"Oh, pray speak, sir!"

"It is, that you will repeat it to no one. You understand?—to no one."

"Oh, I will solemnly promise that to you. But cannot I at least offer her my thanks, this saviour of the unhappy?"

"I will ask Madame d'Harville, and I doubt not she will give her consent."

"Then this lady is called ——"

"The Marquise d'Harville."

"Oh, I shall never forget that name! It shall be my saint, my adoration; when I think that, thanks to her, my wife and children are saved! saved!—no, not all, not all; my poor little Adèle, we shall never see her again. Alas! but it is necessary to remember, that from day to day we might have lost her, for she was doomed, and no human aid could save her." And here the poor lapidary brushed the bitter tears from his eyes.

"As regards the last sad duties to be performed for this little one," said Rodolph, "trust to my advice; this is what must be done: I do not yet occupy my room, which is large, wholesome, and well aired. There is already a bed in it; we will convey thither all that is necessary for yourself and family to be established there till Madame d'Harville has arranged where to lodge you suitably. The body of your child will remain in the garret, where it shall, to-night, as is customary, be attended and watched by a priest. I will go and request M. Pipelet to undertake the management of these sad duties."

"But, sir, it is not necessary to deprive you of your room. Now that we are in peace, and that I no longer fear being taken to prison, our humble apartment appears to me a palace, particularly if my dear Louise remains with us to attend to the family as formerly."

"Your Louise will not again leave you. You said not long ago it would be a luxury to have her always with you; well then, I promise you, as some recompense for your past sufferings, she shall never leave you again."

"Oh, sir, can it be possible?—it surely cannot be a reality?—my senses seem lulled in a sweet dream. I have never thought much of religion. My creed hitherto has been: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you;' but this sudden change from so much misery to so much happiness, shows the hand of an overruling Providence, and I am almost led to exclaim: 'Lord, I believe—help thou my unbelief!'"

"And if a father's grief for the loss of his child could be assuaged by promises of reward or recompense," said Rodolph, "I should remind you, that although the Almighty hand has removed one of your daughters from you, he has mercifully restored another."

"True, true, sir. Henceforth we shall have our dear Louise, to console us for the loss of poor little Adèle. God is indeed good!"

"You will accept my chamber, will you not? If you refuse, how can we manage the mournful duties towards the poor child that is gone. Think also of your wife, whose mind is already so distracted, to leave her for four-and-twenty hours with such an afflicting spectacle before her eyes."

"You think of everything—of all! How kind you are, sir!"

"It is your benefactress you must thank, for her goodness inspires me. I say to you as she would say, and I am sure she would approve of all; so it is agreed that you will accept the offer of my room. Now tell me, this Jacques Ferrand ——"

A dark frown passed across the face of Morel.

"This Jacques Ferrand," continued Rodolph, "is he the lawyer who resides in the Rue du Sentier?"

"Yes, sir; do you know him?" Then, his fears being newly awakened on the subject of Louise, Morel exclaimed: "Since you have heard all that passed, sir, say, say—have I not a right to hate this man? And who knows, if my child, my Louise ——"

The unhappy artisan could not proceed; he groaned aloud, and hid his face with his hands. Rodolph understood his fears.

"The proceedings of the lawyer," said he to him, "ought to reassure you, as he doubtless ordered your arrest, to be revenged for the refusal of your daughter; as for the rest, I have good reason to believe that he is a dishonest man. If he is so," resumed Rodolph, after a moment's silence, "let us believe that Providence will punish him. If the justice of Heaven sometimes appears to slumber, it awakens sooner or later."

"He is very rich, and very hypocritical, sir."

"At the moment of your deepest despair, a guardian angel came to your assistance, and plucked you from inevitable ruin; so, at a moment when least expected, will the Almighty Avenger call upon the lawyer to atone for his past crimes, if he be guilty."

At this moment, Rigolette came from the garret, wiping her eyes. Rodolph said to the young girl: "Will it not, my good neighbour, be better that M. Morel should occupy my room, with his family, until his benefactress, whose agent I am, shall have provided a suitable lodging?"

Rigolette regarded Rodolph with a look of unfeigned surprise. At length she exclaimed: "Ah, sir! are you really in earnest when you make so kind and considerate an offer?"

"Yes, but only on one condition, which will depend on yourself."

"Oh, depend upon all that is in my power!"

"I had some accounts that were required in haste, to arrange for my employers; they will come for them soon. Now, if you will be so neighbourly as to permit me to work in your room, on a corner of your table, I should not disturb your work in the least, and the Morel family can, with the assistance of M. and Madame Pipelet, immediately be settled in my room."

"Oh, if it be only that, sir, most willingly; neighbours ought to assist each other. You have set so good an example by what you have done for that poor Morel, that I am at your service, to render all the assistance I can, sir."

"No, no, don't call me, *sir;* say neighbour. If you use any ceremony towards me, I shall not have courage to intrude myself into your room," said Rodolph, smiling.

"Well then, it shall be so; I will call you 'neighbour,' because you really are so."

"Father, father!" cried one of Morel's little boys, coming out of the garret, "mother is calling you; come directly, pray do." And the lapidary hastily entered the room.

"Now, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette, "you must render me a still further service."

"With all my heart, if it be in my power."

"You are, I am sure, an excellent little housewife. It is necessary to purchase immediately all that is wanted for Morel's family to be properly clothed, bedded, and settled in my room, for there is only sufficient for myself as a bachelor, that was brought yesterday. How can we manage to procure instantly, all I wish to give the Morels?"

Rigolette thought for a moment, and answered: "In two hours you can have all you want: good clothes ready made, warm and neat, with good clean linen for all the family; two little beds for the children, and one for the grandmother—in short, all that is necessary, but it will cost a great deal of money."

"How much?"

"Oh, at least, at the very least five or six hundred francs."

"For everything?"

"Yes, it is a great sum of money, you see," said Rigolette, opening her large eyes, and shaking her head.

"And we can procure all these things ——".

"In two hours."

"You must then be a fairy, my little neighbour!"

"Oh, no, it is quite easy. The Temple is only two steps from here, where you will find all of which you are in want."

"The Temple?"

"Yes, the Temple."

"What place is that?"

"Do you not know the Temple, neighbour?"

"No."

"It is, nevertheless, there where people like you and I furnish our rooms, and clothe ourselves, when we would be economical. Things are cheaper there than elsewhere, and quite as good."

"Really?"

"I assure you. Come, now, I suppose —— But what did you pay for this great coat?"

"I do not know, exactly."

"How, neighbour, you cannot tell how much your great coat cost you?"

"I acknowledge to you, in confidence," said Rodolph, smiling, "that I owe for it; now you understand that I cannot know."

"Ah, neighbour, neighbour, I fear you have not much economy!"

"Alas! no, neighbour."

"You must alter in that respect, if you wish that we should be good friends; and I already see that we shall be such, you appear so kind! You shall see that you will be glad to have me for a neighbour; for, on that account, we can assist each other. I will take care of your linen, and you will help me to clean my room. I rise very early, and will call you, so that you may not be late at the warehouse. I shall knock at the wall until you say to me: 'Good morning, neighbour.'"

"It is agreed; you shall wake me, take care of my linen, and I will clean your room."

"And you will be very neat?"

"Certainly."

"And when you wish to make any purchase, you will go to the Temple, because here is an example: your great coat cost, I suppose, eighty francs; very well, you could have had it at the Temple for thirty francs."

"That is marvellous! Then you think that with five or six hundred francs, these poor Morels ——"

"Will be stocked with every thing they require for a long time to come."

"Neighbour, an idea has just struck me."

"Well, what is it about?"

"Do you understand household affairs — are you clever at making purchases?"

"Yes—rather so," said Rigolette, with a look of simplicity.

"Take my arm, and let us go to the Temple and buy wherewith to clothe the Morels: will that suit you?"

"Oh, what happiness! Poor creatures!—but the money?"

"I have sufficient."

"Five hundred francs?"

"The benefactress of the Morels has given me *carte blanche;* nothing is to be spared that these poor people require. Is there even a place where better things are to be had than at the Temple?"

"You will find nowhere better; then there is everything, and all ready made—little frocks for the children, and dresses for their mother."

"Then let us go at once to the Temple, neighbour."

"Ah! but ——"

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing; but you see, my time is every thing to me; and I am already a little behindhand, in occasionally nursing the poor woman Morel; and you may imagine that an hour in one way and an hour in another makes in time a day; a day brings thirty sous, and if we earn nothing, one must still live all the same. But, pshaw! never mind; I must spare from my nights: and then again, parties of pleasure are rare, and I will make this a joyful day; it will seem to me that I am rich, and that it is with my own money I am buying such good things for these poor Morels. Very well, as soon as I have put on my shawl and cap, I shall be at your service, neighbour."

"Suppose, during the time, I bring my papers to your room?"

"Willingly, and then you will see my apartment," said Rigolette, with pride; "for it is already put in order, and that will prove to you that I am an early riser, and that if you are sleepy and idle, so much the worse for you, for I shall be a troublesome neighbour."

So saying, light as a bird, Rigolette flew down the stairs, followed by Rodolph, who went to his room to brush off the dust he had carried away from M. Pipelet's loft. We will hereafter disclose to the reader why Rodolph was not yet informed of the abduction of Fleur-de-Marie, from the farm of Bouqueval, and why he had not visited the Morels the day after the conversation with Madame d'Harville.

Rodolph, for the sake of appearances, furnished himself with a large roll of papers, which he carried into Rigolette's room.

Rigolette was nearly of the same age as La Goualeuse, her former prison friend. There was, between these two girls, the same difference that exists between laughter and tears; between joyful carelessness and melancholy reverie; between daring improvidence and serious, incessant anticipation of the future; between a nature exquisitely delicate, elevated, poetic, morbidly sensitive, incurably wounded by remorse, and a disposition gay, lively, happy, unreflective, although good and compassionate; for, far from being selfish, Rigolette only cared for the griefs of others; with them she sympathized entirely, devoting herself, soul and body, to those who suffered; but, to use a common expression, her *back turned* on them, she thought no more about them. Often she interrupted a lively laugh to weep passionately, and checked her tears to laugh again. A real child of Paris, Rigolette preferred tumult to quiet, bustle to repose, the sharp ringing harmony of the orchestra at the balls of the *Chartreuse* and the *Colysée*, to the soft murmur of the wind, water, and trees; the deafening tumult of the streets of Paris, to the silence of the country; the dazzling of fireworks, the glittering of the flowers, the crash of the rockets, to the serenity of a lovely night—starlit, clear, and still. Alas! yes, this good girl preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital, to the verdure of its flowery meadows, its pavements miry or tortuous, to the fresh and velvet moss of the paths in the woods, perfumed by violets; the suffocating dust of the barriers or the boulevards to the waving of the golden ears of corn, enamelled by the scarlet of the wild poppy and the azure of the blue-bell.

Rigolette never left home but on Sundays, and every morning she laid in her provisions of chickweed, bread, hempseed, and milk for her birds and herself, as Madame Pipelet observed. But she lived in Paris for the sake of Paris; she would have been miserable to have lived elsewhere than in the capital.

After a few words upon the personal appearance of the grisette, we will introduce Rodolph into his neighbour's apartment.

Rigolette had scarcely attained her eighteenth year; rather below the middling stature, her figure was so gracefully formed and voluptuously rounded, harmonizing so well with a sprightly and elastic step, that an inch more in height would have spoiled the graceful symmetry that distinguished her. The movement of her pretty little feet, encased in faultless boots of black cloth, with a rather stout sole, reminded you of the quick, pretty, and cautious tread of the quail or wagtail. She did not seem to walk, but to pass over the pavement as if she were gliding over its surface. This step, so peculiar to *grisettes*, at once nimble, attractive, and as if somewhat alarmed, may be attributed to three causes: their desire to be thought pretty, their fear of being mistaken for what they are not, and to the desire they always have not to lose a minute in their peregrinations.

Rodolph had never seen Rigolette but by the

BIGOLETTE.

sombre light in the garret of Morel, or on the landing, equally obscure; he was therefore dazzled by the brilliant freshness of the young girl, when he entered silently a room lit by two large windows. He remained for an instant motionless, struck by the charming picture before him. Standing before a glass, placed over the chimney-piece, Rigolette had just finished tying under her chin the strings of a small cap of bordered tulle, trimmed with cherry-coloured riband. The cap, which fitted tightly, was placed far back on the head, and thus revealed two large and thick braids of glossy hair, shining like jet, and falling very low in front. Her eye-brows, well defined, seemed as if traced in ink, and were arched above two large black eyes, full of vivacity and expression; her firm and downy cheeks were tinted with a lovely bloom, like a ripe peach impregnated with the dew of morning. Her small, upturned and saucy nose would have made the fortune of a Lisette or a Marton; her mouth, rather large, with rosy lips and small white teeth, was full of laughter and sport; her cheeks were dimpled, and also her chin, not far from which was a little speck of beauty, a dark mole, *killingly* placed at the corner of her mouth. Between a very low worked collar and the border of the little cap, gathered in by a cherry-coloured riband, was seen a forest of beautiful hair, so carefully twisted and turned up, that its roots were seen as clearly and as black as if they had been painted on the ivory of that beautiful neck. A plum-coloured merino dress, with a plain back and tight sleeves, skilfully made by Rigolette, covered a figure so round and supple, that the young girl never wore a corset—for economy sake. An ease and unusual freedom in the smallest action of the shoulders and body, which resembled the facile, undulating motions of a cat, evinced this peculiarity. Imagine a gown fitting tightly to a form rounded and polished as marble, and we must agree that Rigolette could easily dispense with this accessory to the toilet of which we have spoken. The band of a small apron of dark green levantine formed a girdle round a waist which might have been clasped with your two hands.

Supposing herself to be quite alone (for Rodolph still remained at the door, motionless and unperceived), Rigolette, after having smoothed the bands of her hair with her small white hand, placed her little foot upon a chair, and stooped down to tighten the lace of her boot. This attitude disclosed to Rodolph a snow-white cotton stocking, and a beautifully-formed ancle and leg.

After this detailed account, we may conclude that Rigolette had put on her prettiest cap and apron, to do honour to her neighbour on their visit to the Temple. The person of the pretended merchant's clerk was quite to her taste: his face, benevolent, proud, and noble, pleased her greatly; and then he had shewn so much compassion towards the poor Morels, in giving up his room to them, that, thanks to his kindness of heart, and perhaps also to his good looks, Rodolph had made great steps in the confidence of the grisette, who, according to her ideas of the necessity of reciprocal obligations imposed on neighbours, esteemed herself fortunate that Rodolph had succeeded the commission-traveller, Cabrion, and François Germain; for she had begun to feel that the next room had been too long empty, and she feared, above all, that it would not be *agreeably* occupied.

Rodolph took advantage of his being unperceived, to throw a curious look around this room, which he found deserved more praise than Madame Pipelet had given to the extreme neatness of the humble home of Rigolette. Nothing could be more gay, or better arranged than this little room. A grey paper, with green flowers, covered the walls; the floor shone like a mirror; a saucepan of white earthenware was on the hob, where was also arranged a small quantity of wood, and so fine and small, that you could well compare each piece to a large match. Upon the stone mantel-piece, representing grey marble, were placed for ornament two common pots for flowers, painted of an emerald green; a little wooden stand held a silver watch, which served in lieu of a pendule. On one side shone a candlestick of copper, bright as gold, ornamented with an end of wax candle; on the other side was one of those lamps formed of a cylinder, and with a tin reflector, mounted upon a steel stem, with a leaden stand. A tolerably large glass, in a frame of black wood, surmounted the chimney. Curtains of green and grey Persian stuff, bordered with worsted galloon, cut out and arranged by Rigolette, and placed on slight rods of black iron, draperied the windows; and the bed was covered with a quilt of the same make and material. Two cabinets, painted white and varnished, were placed in each side of the recess; no doubt containing the household utensils—the portable stove, the broom, &c. &c.; for none of these necessaries destroyed the harmonious arrangement of the room.

A chest of drawers, of walnut-tree wood, beautifully grained and well polished, four chairs of the same, a large table with one of those green cloth covers sometimes seen in the cottages of peasants, an arm-chair of straw, with a footstool of the same—such was the unpretending furniture. There was too, in the recess in one of the windows, the cage of the two canaries, faithful companions of Rigolette. By one of those notable inventions which arise only in the minds of poor people, the cage was placed in the middle of a large chest, a foot in depth, and set upon the table: this chest, which Rigolette called the garden of the birds, was filled with earth, covered with moss during the winter, and in the spring with turf and flowers. Rodolph gazed on this apartment with interest and curiosity; he perfectly comprehended the joyous humour of this young girl; he pictured the silence disturbed by the warbling of the birds, and the singing of Rigolette. In the summer, doubtless she worked near the open window, half hidden by a verdant curtain of sweet pea, nasturtium, and blue and white convolvulus; in the winter she sate by the side of the stove, enlivened by the soft light of her lamp.

* * *

Rodolph was lost in these reflections, when, looking mechanically at the door, he noticed a strong bolt—a bolt that would not have been out of place on the door of a prison. This bolt caused him to reflect. It had two meanings, two distinct uses: to shut the door *upon* lovers within—to shut the door *against* lovers without. One of these uses would utterly contradict the assertions of Madame Pipelet—the other would confirm them. Rodolph had just arrived at these conclusions, when Rigolette, turning her head, perceived him, and, without changing her position, said: "What, neighbour! there you are then!" Instantly the pretty leg disappeared under the ample skirt of the plum-coloured

gown, and Rigolette added: "Ah, Mister Cunning!"

"I am here, admiring in silence."

"And what do you admire, neighbour?"

"This pretty little room, for you are lodged like a queen."

"Nay, you see, this is my enjoyment. I seldom go out; so at least I may please myself at home."

"But I do not find fault. What tasteful curtains! and the drawers—as good as mahogany! You must have spent plenty of money here."

"Oh, pray don't remind me of it! I had four hundred and twenty-six francs when I left prison, and almost all is gone."

"When you left prison? You!"

"Yes; it is quite a history. But you do not, I hope, think I was in prison for any crime?"

"Certainly not; but how was it?"

"After the cholera, I found myself alone in the world; I was then, I believe, about ten years of age."

"Until that time, who had taken care of you?"

"Oh, very good people! but one died of the cholera (here the large black eyes of Rigolette became tearful); the little they left was sold to discharge two or three small debts, and I found that no one would shelter me. Not knowing what to do, I went to the guard-house, opposite where I had resided, and said to the sentinel: 'Soldier, my parents are dead, and I do not know where to go. What must I do?' The sub-officer came, and took me to the magistrate, who sent me to prison as a vagabond, which I was allowed to quit at sixteen years of age."

"But your parents?"

"I do not know who was my father; I was six years old when I lost my mother, who had taken me from the Foundling Hospital, where she had been compelled at first to place me. The kind people of whom I have spoken, lived in our house; they had no children, and seeing me an orphan, took care of me."

"And how did they live? What was their condition in life?"

"Papa Crétu, so I always called him, was a house-painter, and the female who lived with him worked at her needle."

"Then they were tolerably well off?"

"Oh, as well off as most people in their station. Though they were not married, they still called each other husband and wife. They had their ups and downs; to-day in abundance, if there was plenty of work, to-morrow straitened, if there was not any: but that did not prevent them from being contented and gay (at this remembrance the face of Rigolette brightened). There was not in that vicinity a house like it—always cheerful, always singing; and with all that, good and kind beyond belief! What was theirs, was for others also. Mamma Crétu was a plump body of thirty, clean as a new penny, lively as an eel, merry as a chaffinch. Her husband was a really good-tempered fellow; he had a large nose, a large mouth, always a paper cap on his head, and a face so droll—oh, so droll, that you could not look at him without laughing! When he returned home after work he did nothing but sing, make faces, and gambol like a child. He made me dance, and jump upon his knees; he played with me as if he were of my own age, and his wife entirely spoilt me. Both required of me but one thing—to be good-humoured; and in that, thank God! I never disappointed them: so they baptised me Rigolette,* and the name remained with me. As to gaiety, they set me the example; never did I see them sad. If they uttered reproaches at all, it was the wife said to her husband: 'Stop, Crétu, you make me laugh too much!' or he said to her: 'Hold your tongue, Ramonette (I do not know why he called her Ramonette), you will make me ill, you are too funny!' and as for me, I laughed to see them laugh. This is how I was brought up, and how my character was formed; and I trust I have profited by it!"

"To perfection, neighbour! Then they never quarrelled?"

"Never, oh, never! Sunday, Monday, sometimes Tuesday, they had, as they called it, a *wedding*, and took me always with them. Papa Crétu was a very good workman; when employed, he could earn what he pleased, and so could his wife too. As soon as they had sufficient for the Sunday and Monday, and could live till then, well or ill, they were satisfied. After that, if they were on short allowance, they were still contented. I remember that, when we had only bread and water, Papa Crétu used to take out of his library ——"

"He had a library, then?"

"So he called a little chest, where he put his collections of new songs; for he bought all the new songs, and learned them all. When there was nothing in the house but bread, he would take from his library an old cookery-book, and say to us: 'Let us see what we will have to eat to-day—this or that!' and he would read to us a list of many good things. Each chose their dish. Papa Crétu would then take an empty stew-pan, and with the drollest manner and the funniest jests in the world, pretend to put in all the ingredients necessary to make a good stew, and seemed to pour it into a plate, also empty, which he would place on the table, always with grimaces that made us hold our sides; then, taking his book again, he would read, for example, the receipt for a good fricassée of chicken that we had chosen, and that made our mouths water; we then ate our bread (while he read), laughing like so many mad things."

"And were they in debt?"

"Not at all! As long as they had money, they feasted; when they had none, they dined on *water-colour*, as Papa Crétu called it."

"And the future—they did not think of that?"

"Oh, yes, they thought, of it; but then, you see, with us the present and future were like Sunday and Monday—the one we spent gaily and happily outside the barriers, the other we got over in the *faubourgs*."

"Since these good people agreed so well together, why did they not marry?"

"One of their friends once asked the same question, before me."

"Well?"

"They answered: 'If we should ever have children, we will marry; but we are very well as we are. Where is the necessity of compelling us to do that which we now do willingly? Besides, it is expensive, and we have no money to spare.' But see how I am gossipping! as I always do on the subject of those good people, who were so kind to me, for I never tire of speaking of them. Here, neighbour, be civil enough to take my shawl, which is on the bed, and fasten it under the collar of my habit-shirt

* Probably from the French verb *Rigoler* "to be merry."

with this large pin, and we will then go, for we shall be some time selecting all you wish to purchase for the Morels."

Rodolph hastened to obey the instructions of Rigolette; he took from the bed a large plaid shawl, and carefully arranged it on the lovely shoulders of his neighbour.

"Now then, lift up the collar a little, press the dress and shawl close together, and stick in the pin. Above all, take care not to prick me."

The prince executed the given instructions with zealous nicety; then he observed, smilingly, to the grisette: "Ah, Mademoiselle Rigolette, I must not be your *femme de chambre*—there is danger in it!"

"Yes, yes, I understand," answered Rigolette, gaily, "there is great danger of my having a pin run into me by your awkwardness. But now," added she, after they had left the room and locked the door after them; "here, neighbour, take the key; is is so very heavy, that I always fear it will tear my pocket. It is quite a little pistol!" And then she laughed merrily.

Rodolph accordingly took possession of an enormous key—such a one as is sometimes seen in those allegorical representations where the vanquished offer the keys of their cities to the conquerors. Although Rodolph believed himself sufficiently changed by years not to be recognised by Polidori, he yet pulled up the collar of his coat before passing the door of the quack Bradamanti.

Neighbour, do not forget to tell M. Pipelet that some goods will be brought here, which must be taken to your room," said Rigolette.

"You are right, neighbour; we will step into the lodge as we pass by."

M. Pipelet, his immense hat, as usual, on his head, and dressed in his green coat, was sitting gravely before a table, on which was spread pieces of leather and fragments of old shoes; he was occupied in putting a new sole to a boot, which he did with that serious and meditative air which characterised all his doings. Anastasie was absent from the lodge.

"Well, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, "I trust things will be better now! Thanks to my neighbour, the poor Morels were rescued from trouble just as those cruel bailiffs were about to drag the unhappy man to prison."

"Oh! these bailiffs are really without hearts, or manners either, mademoiselle," added M. Pipelet, in an angry voice, and flourishing the boot he was repairing, in which he had thrust his left hand and arm. "No! I do not fear to repeat, in the face of heaven and man, that they are without manners; they took advantage of the darkness of the staircase to make rude remarks on my wife's person. On hearing the cries of her offended modesty, in spite of myself, I yielded to the impulse of my temper. I do not disguise it, my first movement was to remain perfectly motionless."

"But afterwards you followed them, I hope, M. Pipelet?" said Rigolette, who had some trouble to preserve a serious air.

"I thought of it," answered M. Pipelet, with a deep sigh; "but when those shameless ruffians passed before my door, my blood rose, and I could not hinder myself from putting my hand before my eyes, to hide the monsters from my sight! But that does not surprise me; I knew something unfortunate would happen to me to-day, for I dreamed—last night—of Cabrion!"

Rigolette smiled, as the deep sighs of M. Pipelet were mingled with the blows of the hammer which he vigorously applied to the sole of the old boot he was mending.

"You truly acted the part of a wise man, my dear M. Pipelet, that of despising offences, and holding it beneath you to revenge them. But let us forget these miserable bailiffs. Will you be kind enough to do me a favour?" asked Rodolph.

"Man is born to assist his fellow-man," replied M. Pipelet, in a sententious and melancholy tone; "and more particularly so when it is for so good a lodger as yourself."

"It will be necessary to take up to my room, different things which will be brought here presently, and which are for the Morels."

"Be assured, I will take charge of them," replied Pipelet, "and faithfully carry out your wishes."

"And afterwards," said Rodolph, sadly, "you must obtain a priest to watch by the little girl the Morels have lost in the night. Go and register her death, and order a decent funeral."

"Make your mind quite easy, sir," replied Pipelet, with increased gravity of manner; "directly my wife comes back, I will go to the mayor, the church, and the *traiteur's*—to the church for the soul of the dead, to the *traiteur's* for the body of the living," added M. Pipelet, philosophically and poetically. "You may consider it done—already done, in both cases, my good sir."

At the entrance to the alley, Rodolph and Rigolette found themselves face to face with Anastasie, who had returned from market, bearing a heavy basket of provisions.

"Well done!" exclaimed the portress, looking at them both with a knowing and significant air; "already arm-in-arm! That's your sort! Young people will be young people—and where's the harm? If they don't enjoy themselves while they are young, they will find it difficult to do so when they get old! My poor dear Alfred and I, for instance, when we were young, didn't we —— But now, oh, dear! oh, dear!—Well, never mind; go along, my dears, and make yourselves happy while you can. Love for ever!" Then, having gazed after them for a minute, the old woman disappeared in the darkness of the alley, calling out: "Alfred, do not grumble, old darling! Here is thy 'Stasie, who brings thee good things—rare dainties!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEMPLE.

To the snow of the past night had succeeded a very sharp wind; so that the pavement of the streets, usually muddy, was almost dry, as Rigolette and Rodolph directed their steps towards the extensive and singular bazaar called the Temple. The young girl leant without ceremony upon the arm of her cavalier, with as little restraint as though they had been intimate for a long time.

"Is she not funny, that Madame Pipelet?" said the grisette to Rodolph; "and what odd remarks she makes!"

"Indeed, neighbour, I think she is quite right."

"In what?"

"Why, when she said: 'Young people will be young people—and where's the harm?—Love for ever!'"

"Well?"

"Well! I mean to say that I perfectly agree with her."

"Agree with her!"

"Yes, I should like nothing better than to pass my youth with you, taking '*Love for ever!*' for my motto."

"I believe it; you are not difficult to please."

"Where is the harm? We are neighbours."

"If we were not neighbours, I should not walk out with you in this way."

"Then you allow me to hope ——"

"Hope what?"

"That you will learn to love me."

"I love you already."

"Really?"

"To be sure I do, and for a very simple reason. You are good and lively; although poor yourself, you do all you can for those unfortunate Morels, in interesting rich people in their behalf; you have a face that pleases me much, and a well-turned figure, which is agreeable and flattering to me, as I shall frequently accept your arm. Here are, I think, sufficient reasons that I should love you."

Then, interrupting herself to enjoy a hearty laugh, Rigolette cried: "Look! look at that fat woman, with her two old furred shoes; one could imagine her drawn along by two cats without tails!" And again Rigolette laughed merrily.

"I prefer looking at you, neighbour; I am so happy in thinking you already love me."

"I tell you so, because it is so; if you did not please me, I should say so all the same. I cannot reproach myself with having ever deceived or flattered any one; when people please me, I tell them so at once."

Then, interrupting herself again, to stop before the window of a shop, the grisette exclaimed: "Oh, look at that beautiful clock, and those two pretty vases! I have already saved up three francs and a half towards buying some like them. In five or six years I may be able to manage it."

"Saved up, neighbour? Then I suppose you earn ——"

"At least thirty sous a day—sometimes forty, but I only reckon upon thirty; it is more prudent, and I regulate my expenses accordingly," said Rigolette, with an air as important as though it related to the transactions of a financier.

"But, with thirty sous a day, how can you manage to live?"

"The reckoning is not difficult; shall I explain it to you, neighbour? You appear rather extravagant, so it may serve you as an example."

"Let me hear then."

"Thirty sous a day will make forty-five francs a month, will it not?"

"Yes."

"Well then, by that account I have twelve francs for lodging, and twenty-three francs for living."

"Twenty-three francs for a month's living!"

"Yes, quite as much. I acknowledge that, for a person like myself, it is enormous; but then, you see, I refuse myself nothing."

"Oh, you little glutton!"

"Ah! but I also include therein food for my birds."

"Certainly, if you reckon for three, it is less extravagant. But let me hear the detail of your every-day management, that I may benefit by the instruction."

"Listen then. A pound of bread, that is four sous; milk, two sous—that makes six; four sous for vegetables in winter, or fruits and salad in summer (I doat on salad and vegetables, because they are clean to prepare, and do not soil the hands)—there is already ten sous; three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar, as seasoning—thirteen sous; two pailsful of water (oh, that is a luxury!) that will make fifteen sous; add to that, two sous for chickweed and hempseed for my two birds, which usually share with me my bread and milk—that is twenty-two or twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And do you never eat meat?"

"Oh! I dare say—meat, indeed! that costs from ten to twelve sous a pound; how can I think of that? Besides, it smells of the kitchen, of the stewpan; instead of which, milk, fruit, and vegetables, require no cooking. I will tell you a dish I am very fond of, which is not troublesome, and which I make to perfection."

"Pray let me know what it is."

"I put fine potatoes in the oven of my stove; when they are done, I mash them with a little butter and milk, and a pinch of salt. It is a meal for the gods! If you are well behaved, I will let you taste them some day."

"Prepared by your pretty hands, it cannot fail to be excellent. But let us see, neighbour; we have already reckoned twenty-three francs for living, and twelve francs for lodging—that makes thirty-five francs a month."

"Well then, out of the forty-five or fifty francs I earn, there remain to me ten or fifteen francs for wood and oil during winter, as well as for my dress and washing—that is to say, for soap—as, excepting my sheets, I wash for myself: that is another luxury—a laundress would pretty well ruin me; and as I also iron very well, I thereby save my money. During the five winter months, I burn a load and a half of wood, and expend four or five sous-worth of oil in the day for my lamp; that makes nearly eighty francs a year for my light and fire."

"So that there remains to you more than a hundred francs for your clothing?"

"Yes; and it is from that I have saved the three francs and a half."

"But your dresses—your shoes and stockings—this pretty cap?"

"My caps I only wear when I go out, and that does not ruin me, for I make them myself, at home, I am satisfied with my hair. As to my dresses, my boots—is there not the Temple?"

"Oh, yes, that convenient, excellent Temple! Well, you buy there ——"

"Very good and pretty dresses. You must know that rich ladies are accustomed to give their old dresses to their waiting-maids—when I say old, I mean that may they have worn them a month or two—and their servants go and sell them to people who keep shops at the Temple, for almost nothing. Thus, you see, I have a niece merino dress that I bought for fifteen francs, which perhaps cost sixty; it had hardly been put on, and is beautifully fine. I altered it to fit me, and I flatter myself it does me credit."

"Indeed it does, and much credit too. Thanks to the resources of the Temple, I begin to think you can manage to dress respectably with a hundred francs a year."

"To be sure I can. Why I can buy charming dresses for five or six francs; and boots, the same that I have on now, and almost new, for two or three francs. Look! would not any one say that they were made for me?" said Rigolette, stop-

ping, and showing her pretty little foot, very nicely set off by the well-made and well-fitting boot she wore."

"The foot is charming, truly; but you must find a difficulty in fitting it. After that, you will doubtless tell me they sell children's shoes at the Temple."

"You are a sad flatterer, neighbour; however, after what I have told you, you will acknowledge that a girl, quite alone and well disposed, can live respectably on thirty sous a day? I must tell you, by the by, the four hundred and fifty francs which I brought from prison, assisted materially in establishing me. When once known that I possessed furniture, it inspired confidence, and I had work entrusted to me to take home; but it was necessary to wait a long time before I could meet with employment. Fortunately, I kept sufficient money to live upon for three months, without earning anything."

"With your gay, heedless manner, allow me to say, that you possess a great deal of good sense, neighbour."

"Nay, when one is alone in the world, and would not be under obligation to any one, you must exercise some management to build your nest well, and take care of it when it is built, as the saying is."

"And your nest is delightful!"

"Is it not? for, as I have said, I refuse myself nothing; I consider I have a lodging above my situation. Then again, I have birds; in summer always at least two pots of flowers on the mantel-piece, besides the boxes in the windows; and then, as I told you, I had already three francs and more in my money-box, towards ornaments I hoped one day to be able to purchase for the chimney-piece."

"And what became of these savings?"

"Why, latterly I have seen those poor Morels so unhappy, so very unhappy, that I said to myself: 'There is no sense in having these ugly pieces of money idling in a box, whilst good people are perishing of hunger beside you, so I lent them to Morel. When I say lent, I mean I told him I only lent them, in order to spare his feelings, for I assure you I gave them freely."

"Yes, neighbour, but as they are no longer in want, you surely will not refuse to allow them to repay you?"

"True, I shall not refuse; it will be something towards the purchase of chimney-ornaments, of which I am sometimes silly enough to dream."

"And then again, you ought to think a little of the future."

"The future?"

"Should you fall ill, for instance."

"I, ill!" And Rigolette laughed, heartily.

"Why not?"

"Am I a likely looking person to be sick then?"

"Never have I beheld a face more rosy and fresh!"

"Very well then, why do you think I shall be ill?"

"Nay, but ——"

"At eighteen years of age, leading the life I do, how can that be possible? I rise at five o'clock, winter and summer; I go to bed at ten or eleven; I eat to satisfy my hunger, which is not very great, it is true; I sing like a lark all day, and at night I sleep like a dormouse; I have a mind free, joyful, and contented, with the certainty of never being without work, and with all these, how can I be ill? It would be the height of absurdity to think of such a thing. Ill, indeed!" And at the bare idea Rigolette again burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, so loud and prolonged, that a stout man, who was walking before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned round quite angrily, believing himself to be the cause of all this hilarity. Rigolette, resuming her composure, made a half-courtesy to the stout person, and, pointing to the animal under his arm, said: "Is your dog so very tired, sir?"

The fat man grumbled something, and continued his walk.

"Come, come, neighbour," said Rodolph, "are you losing your senses?"

"It is your fault if I am."

"My fault?"

"Yes, because you say such silly things to me."

"What, because I tell you that you may fall ill?"

And, once more overcome by the irresistible mirth caused by the absurdity of Rodolph's suggestion, Rigolette again relapsed into long and hearty fits of laughter; while Rodolph, struck with this blind, yet happy confidence in the future, reproached himself with having attempted to shake it. He thought, with horror, that an illness of a month could ruin this peaceful mode of existence. Rigolette's deep faith in her health, and her eighteen years, her only treasures, appeared to Rodolph something akin to holiness; for, on the part of the young girl, it was neither carelessness nor improvidence, but an instinctive reliance on the commiseration of Divine justice, which could not abandon an industrious and virtuous creature, whose only error was a too confident dependence on her youth and health, which she enjoyed from the Giver of all good gifts. The birds, as they cleave with gay and agile wings the azure skies of summer, or skim lightly over the fields of blooming clover, do they think of the cheerless winter?

"Then," said Rodolph to the grisette, "you are not ambitious to possess more than you have?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing?"

"No—that is to say, I should like to have my chimney ornaments, and I shall have them, though I do not know when; but I have it in my head to possess them, and I will, if I should have to sit up to work all night to do it."

"And beside these ornaments ——"

"I want for nothing; I cannot recollect a single thing more that I care about possessing now."

"How now?"

"Because, if you had asked me the same question yesterday, I should have told you I was longing for a suitable neighbour, so that I could arrange with him comfortably, as I have always done, to perform little services for him, that he might return nice little attentions to me."

"Well, it is already agreed, my pretty neighbour, that you shall take charge of my linen, and that I shall clean your room — without naming your waking me early in the morning, by tapping at the wall."

"And do you think that will be all?"

"What else is there?"

"Oh, bless your heart, you have not arrived at the end of half what I expect of you. Is it not necessary that on Sundays you take me for a

walk on the Boulevards?—you know that is the only day I have for recreation."

"To be sure; and in summer we will go into the country."

"No, I detest the country. I like no place so well as Paris. Nevertheless, I went, once upon a time, out of good-nature, with a young friend of mine, who was my companion in prison, to visit Meudon and Saint-Germain. My friend was a very pleasant, good girl, whom they called La Goualeuse, because she was always singing."

"And what has become of her?"

"I do not know. She spent all the money she brought from prison, without appearing to be much amused; she was always sad, but sympathising and charitable. When we used to go out together, I had not then any work; but when I succeeded in obtaining some, I did not stir from home. I gave her my address, but as she has not been to see me, doubtless she has also some occupation, and, like me, is too busy to get out. I only mention this to let you know, neighbour, that I love Paris above every place. But, whenever you can, on Sunday, you may take me to dine at the ordinary, sometimes to the play; or, if you have not any money, you can take me to see the shops, which will amuse me almost as much. Rest satisfied, that in our little excursions I shall not disgrace you. You will see how neat I shall look in my pretty dress of blue levantine, that I only wear on Sundays: it suits me to perfection. With that I wear a pretty little cap, trimmed with lace and orange-coloured riband, which does not contrast badly with my black hair; boots of satin, that I had made for me; an elegant shawl of silk, in imitation of cashmere! Indeed, I expect, neighbour, people will turn round to look after us as we pass along. The men will say: 'Really, that is a very pretty little girl, upon my word!' And the women, on their part, will exclaim: 'Look at that tall young man; what an elegant shape! He has an air that is truly fashionable! and his little brown moustache becomes him exceedingly.' And I shall be of their opinion, for I adore the moustache. Unfortunately, M. Germain did not wear it, because of the situation he held. M. Cabrion did, but then it was red, like his large beard, and I do not like those great beards; besides he made himself so ridiculously conspicuous in the streets, and teazed poor M. Pipelet so much. Now M. Giraudeau, who was my neighbour before M. Cabrion, dressed well, and altogether had a very good appearance, but he squinted. At first, it annoyed me very much, because he always appeared to be looking at some one at the side of me, and without thinking, I often turned round to see who ——" And again Rigolette laughed loud and heartily.

Rodolph, as he listened to this prattle, asked himself, for the third or fourth time, what he ought to think of the *virtue* of Rigolette. Sometimes, the frankness of the grisette and the remembrance of the large bolt, made him almost believe that she loved her neighbours merely as *brothers* or *companions*, and that Madame Pipelet had calumniated her; then again, he smiled at his credulity, in thinking it probable that a girl so young, so pretty, so solitary, should have escaped the seductions of Messieurs Giraudeau, Cabrion, and Germain. Still, for all that, the frankness and originality of Rigolette disposed him to think favourably of her.

"You delight me, neighbour, by your manner of disposing of my Sundays," said Rodolph, gaily; "we will have some famous treats!"

"Stop a moment, Mr. Spendthrift. I warn you that I shall keep the house. In the summer, we can dine very well—yes, very well—for three francs, at the Chartreuse or at the Montmatre Hermitage, half a dozen country dances, or valses included, with a ride upon the wooden horses;—oh, I do so love riding on horseback! That will make up your five francs—not a farthing more, I assure you. Do you waltz?"

"Very well."

"Oh, this pleases me! M. Cabrion always trod on my feet, and then for fun he would throw fulminating balls on the ground, which was the reason they would not let him go any more to the Chartreuse."

"Be assured, I will answer for my discretion wherever we go together; and as to the fulminating balls, I will have nothing to do with them. But in winter, what shall we do?"

"In winter, we are less hungry, and can dine luxuriously for forty sous; then we shall have three francs left for the play, for I would not have you exceed a hundred sous—that is indeed too much to spend in pleasure; but if alone, you would spend much more at the ale-house or the billiard-rooms, with low fellows, who smell horribly of tobacco. Is it not better to pass the day pleasantly with a young friend, very laughter-loving and discreet, who will save you some expense, by hemming your cravats, and taking care of your other little domestic affairs?"

"It is clearly a gaining for me, neighbour; only if my friends should meet me with my pretty little friend on my arm, what then?"

"Well, they will look at us and say: 'He is not at all unlucky, that Rodolph!'"

"You know my name, then?"

"Why, to be sure I do. When I learnt that the next room was let, I asked to whom."

"Yes, when people meet us together, no doubt, as you say, they will remark: 'What a lucky fellow that Rodolph is!' and will envy me."

"So much the better!"

"They will think me perfectly happy!"

"Of course they will; and so much the better!"

"And if I should not be so happy as I seem?"

"What does that matter, provided they believe it; men require nothing further than mere outward show."

"But your reputation?"

Here Rigolette burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"The reputation of a grisette! Would any one believe in such a phenomenon?" answered she. "If I had father or mother, brother or sister, for them I should be careful of what people would say; but I am alone in the world, and am careless about it, knowing myself to be free from merited reproach."

"But still I should be very uncomfortable."

"What for?"

"In being thought happy in having you for a companion, while, on the contrary, I love you. It would be something like taking dinner with Papa Crétu—eating dry bread, whilst a cookery book was being read to me."

"Nonsense, nonsense! You will be very happy to live after my fashion. I shall prove so mild, grateful, and unwearying, that you will say: 'After all, it is as well to pass my Sunday

[Rigolette and Rodolph on their way to the Temple.]

with her as with any one else.' If you should be disengaged in the evenings during the week, and it would not annoy you, you might pass them in my room, and have the advantage of my fire and lamp; you could hire romances, and read them aloud to me. Better than go and lose your money at billiards. Otherwise, if you were kept late at your business, or that you liked better to go to the *café*, you could wish me good night on your return, if I were still up; but should I be in bed, at an early hour next day I would say good morning, by tapping at the wall to wake you. M. Germain, my last neighbour, spent all his evenings in that manner with me, and did not complain; he read all Walter Scott's works to me, which was very interesting. Sometimes on Sunday, when the weather was bad, instead of leaving home, he bought something nice, and we made an excellent dinner in my room; after which we amused ourselves with reading, and I was almost as much pleased as if I had been at the theatre. This is to show you that it would not be difficult to live with me, and that I will do what I can to make things pleasant and agreeable. And then, you who talk of illness, if ever you should be laid up, it is I who am a real little Sister of Charity; only ask the Morels what sort of a nurse I am! So, you see, you are not aware of all your happiness; it is as good as a lucky hit in the lottery, to have me for a neighbour."

"That is true, I have always been lucky; but, speaking of M. Germain, where is he now?"

"In Paris, I believe."

"Then you never see him now?"

"Since he left this house, he has not been to see me."

"But where does he live, and what is he doing?"

"Why do you ask those questions, neighbour?"

"Because I feel jealous of him," said Rodolph, smiling, "and I would ——"

"Jealous!" exclaimed Rigolette, laughing. "There is no reason for that, poor fellow!"

"Seriously then, I have the greatest interest in knowing the address of M. Germain; you know where he lives, and I may, without boasting, add, that I am incapable of abusing the secret I ask of you; it will be for his interest also."

"Seriously, neighbour, I believe you wish every good to M. Germain, but he made me promise not to give his address to any one; therefore, be assured, that as I do not give it to you, it is because I cannot. You ought not to be angry with me; if you had entrusted a secret to me, you would be pleased to find I acted as I am now doing."

"But ——"

"Stop, neighbour! Once for all, do not speak to me any more on that subject; I have made a promise, I intend to keep it, and, whatever you may say to me, I shall still answer you in the same way."

In spite of her giddiness and frivolity, the young girl pronounced these last words so decisively, that Rodolph felt, to his great regret, that he would never obtain from her the desired information about Germain; and he felt a repugnance to employ artifice in surprising the confidence of Rigolette. He paused a moment, and then resumed: "Do not let us speak of it again, neighbour. Upon my soul, you keep so well the secrets of others, that I am no longer surprised at your keeping your own."

"Secrets! I have secrets! I wish I had some; it must be so very amusing."

"Do you mean to say, that you have not a little secret of the heart?"

"A secret of the heart!"

"In a word, have you never loved?" said Rodolph, looking steadfastly at Rigolette, to read the truth in her tell-tale face.

"Loved!—have I not loved M. Giraudeau, M. Cabrion, M. Germain, and you?"

"And did you love them the same as you love me—neither more nor less?"

"Oh, I cannot tell you that, exactly—less, perhaps; for I had to habituate myself to the squint of M. Giraudeau, to the red beard and disagreeable jests of M. Cabrion, and the melancholy of M. Germain, for he was so very sad, poor young man; while you, on the contrary, pleased me instantly."

"You will not feel angry, neighbour, if I speak to you as a friend?"

"Oh, no, don't be afraid—I am very good-natured; and then you are so kind, that I am sure you have not the heart to say anything that would cause me pain."

"Certainly not; but now, frankly, have you never had—a lover?"

"Lover! Now, is that very likely? Have I time for that?"

"But what has time to do with it?"

"Everything. First of all, I should be as jealous as a tiger, and I should be constantly worrying myself with one idea or the other. Then again, do I earn money enough to enable me to lose two or three hours a day in grief and tears?—and if he deceived me, what weeping, what sorrow! All that would throw me pretty well behindhand, you may guess."

"But all lovers are not unfaithful, and do not cause their mistress to weep."

"That would be still worse. If he were very good and loving, could I live a moment away from him? and then, as most likely he would be obliged to stay all day, either at the desk, manufactory, or shop, I should be like a poor, restless spirit during his absence. I should invent a thousand chimeras; imagine that others loved him, and that he was with them. Heaven only knows what I might be tempted to do in my despair! Certain it is, that my work would be neglected, and what would become of me then? I can manage, quiet as I am, to live by working twelve or fourteen hours a day; but, were I to lose two or three days in the week by tormenting myself, how could I make up the lost time? Impossible! I must then take a situation. Oh, no, I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?"

"Yes; I could enter as forewoman to the person who now employs me; I should receive four hundred francs a year, with board and lodging."

"And you will not accept that?"

"No, indeed. I should be dependent on others; instead of which, however humble my home may be, it is my own. I owe no one anything; I have courage, health, and gaiety, with an agreeable neighbour like yourself: what do I want more?"

"Then you have never thought of marrying?"

"I marry! I could only expect to meet with a husband as poor as myself; and look at the unhappy Morels—see where it ends! When you have but yourself to look to, you can always manage somehow."

"Then you never build castles in the air—never dream?"

"Yes, I dream of my chimney-ornaments; besides them, what can I desire?"

"But suppose, now, some relation, of whom you have never heard, should die and leave you a fortune—say twelve hundred francs a year—to you, who live upon five hundred francs ——"

"It might prove a good thing—perhaps an evil."

"An evil?"

"I am very happy as I am; I can enjoy the life I now lead, but I do not know how I should pass my time if I were rich. After a hard day's work, I go to bed, my lamp extinguished, and, by a few light embers that remain in my stove, I see my room neat—curtains, drawers, chairs, birds, watch, and my table spread with goods entrusted to me—and then I say to myself: 'All this I owe to myself.' Truly, neighbour, these thoughts cradle me softly, and sometimes I go to sleep with pride, always with content. But, here we are at the Temple! You must confess, now, that it has a superb appearance."

Although Rodolph did not participate in the deep veneration expressed by Rigolette, at the sight of the Temple, he was nevertheless struck by the singular appearance of this enormous bazaar, with its numerous divisions and passages. Towards the middle of the Rue du Temple, not far from a fountain which was placed in the angle of a large square, might be seen an immense parallelogram built of timber, surmounted with a slated roof. That building is the Temple. Bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouars, on the right by the street Perocé, it finished in a vast circular building, surrounded with a gallery, forming a sort of arcade. A long opening, intersecting this parallelogram in its length and breadth, divided it in two equal parts; these were in their turn divided and sub-divided into

little lateral and transverse courts, sheltered from the rain by the roof of the edifice. In this bazaar, new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the smallest rag of any stuff, the smallest piece of iron, brass, or steel, there found its buyer or seller.

There you saw purchasers of scraps of cloth of all colours, of all shades, of all qualities and fashion, to assimilate either with worn-out or ill-fitting garments. Here were to be found dealers in strips and pieces of every coloured cloth, of all ages, qualities, shades, and capabilities, for the service of such as wished to repair or alter damaged or ill-fitting garments. Some of the shops presented huge piles of old shoes, some trodden down of heel, others twisted, torn, split, and in holes, presenting a mass of nameless, formless, colourless objects, among which were grimly visible some species of *fossil* soles, about an inch thick, studded with thick nails resembling the door of a prison, and hard as a horse's hoof, the actual skeletons of shoes whose other component parts had long since been devoured by Time. Yet all this mouldy, dried-up accumulation of decaying rubbish found a willing purchaser, an extensive body of *merchants* trading in this particular line.

There existed retailers of gloves, fringes, cords, ravellings of silk, cotton, or thread, during the destruction of curtains, &c. rendered unfit for use. Other industrious persons occupied themselves in the business of women's bonnets: these bonnets never came to their shop, but in the bags of the retailer, after the most singular changes, the most extraordinary transformations, the most unheard-of discolourations, to prevent the merchandise taking up too much room in a shop usually of the size of a large box; they folded these bonnets in two, after which they smoothed them and pressed them down excessively tight—saving the salt, it is positively the same process as is used in the preservation of herrings: thus you may imagine how much, thanks to this method of stowage, may be contained in this span of four feet square.

When the purchaser presents himself, they withdraw these bags from the pressure to which they are subject; the merchant, with a careless air, gives a slight push with his fist to the bottom of the crown, to raise it up, smoothes the front upon his knee, and presents to your eyes an object at once whimsically fantastical, which recalls confusedly to your memory those fabulous headdresses, particularly developed by workmen in the galleries, the aunts of the opera-dancers, or duennas of the provincial theatres. Further on, at the sign of the *Gout du jour*, under the arcades of the Rotunda, elevated at the end of the wide opening which separates the Temple in two parts, were hanging numerous clothes, in colour, shape, and make still more extravagant than those of the bonnets just described. Here were seen frock coats, set off by three rows of buttons like the hussars, and warmly ornamented with a little fur collar of fox's-skin. Great coats, formerly of bottle green, rendered by time invisible, edged with a black cord, and brightened by a lining of plaid, blue and yellow, which had a most laughable effect. Coats, formerly styled the "codfish tails," of a reddish brown, with a handsome collar of plush, ornamented with buttons, once gilt, but now of a bright copper colour. There were also to be seen Polish cloaks, with collars of catskin, frogged, and lined with old black cotton velvet; not far from these were dressing gowns, cunningly made of watchmen's old great coats, from which were taken the many capes, and which they had lined with pieces of printed cotton; the better sort were of blue and dark green, patched up with sundry pieces of variegated colours, and fastened round the waist with an old bell-rope serving for a girdle, and making a finish to these elegant *déshabillés* so exultingly worn by Robert Macaire.

We shall briefly pass over a variety of costumes more or less uncouth, in the midst of which might here and there be seen some authentic relics of royalty or greatness, dragged by the revolution of time from palaces and noble halls, to figure on the dingy shelves of the Rotunda of the Temple.

Those exhibitions of old shoes, old hats, and ridiculous old dresses, were on the grotesque side of the bazaar—the quarter for beggars, ostentatiously decked out and disguised; but it must be allowed, or rather distinctly asserted, that this vast establishment was of immense use to the humble classes, or those of limited means. There they might purchase, at an amasing reduction in price, excellent things, almost new, the actual depreciation in value being almost imaginary. On one side of the Temple, set apart for bedding, there were heaps of coverlids, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Further on were carpets, curtains, and all sorts of kitchen utensils; besides clothes, shoes, and head-dresses for all classes and all ages. These objects, generally of perfect cleanliness, offered nothing repugnant to the sight.

One could scarcely believe, before visiting the bazaar, how little time and money were requisite to fill a cart with all that is necessary to the complete fitting-out of two or three families who wanted everything.

Rodolph was struck by the manner at once eager, obliging, and merry, with which the various dealers, standing outside their shops, solicited the custom of the passers by; these manners, stamped with a sort of respectful familiarity, seemed to belong to another age.

Scarcely had Rigolette and her companion appeared in the long passage occupied by those who sold bedding, than they were surrounded by offers the most seductive.

"Sir, come in and see my mattresses; they are like new. I will unsew a corner, that you may examine the stuffing; you will think it lamb's-wool, it is so white and soft!"

"My pretty little lady, I have sheets of fine holland, better than new, for their first stiffness has been taken out of them; they are soft as a glove, strong as iron."

"Come, my elegant new-married couple, buy of me a counterpane. See how soft, warm, and light they are; you would imagine them of eider-down—nearly new—have not been used twenty times; look, my little lady, decide for your husband—give me your custom—I will furnish very cheaply for you—you will be satisfied—you will come again to Mother Bouvard. You will find all you want in my shop; yesterday I made beautiful purchases—you shall see them all—come in, then—it will not cost anything to look."

"By my faith, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette, "this good fat woman shall have the preference; she takes us for young married people. The supposition flatters me, and I decide for her shop."

"To the good fat woman's, then," answered Rigolette; "her face pleases me, too."

The grisette and her companion then entered

the shop of Mother Bouvard. By a magnanimity perhaps unexampled anywhere but at the Temple, the rivals of Mother Bouvard did not rebel at the preference accorded her; one of the neighbours, indeed, had the generosity to say: "So long as it is Mother Bouvard, and no other, who has this customer, it is very well; she has a family, and is the oldest inhabitant of the Temple, and an honour to it." It was, besides, impossible to have a face more prepossessing, open, and joyous than hers.

"Here, my pretty little lady," said she to Rigolette, who examined everything with the manner of one capable of judging, "this is the purchase of which I spoke: two beds, completely fitted up, and as good as new. If by chance you wanted a little old secretary, and not dear, there is one," and she pointed to it, "that I had in the same lot. Although I do not generally buy furniture, I could not refuse to take it, as the person of whom I had all this seemed so unhappy. Poor lady! it was the parting with that, above all, that appeared to rend her heart; it had been an old piece of furniture very long with the family."

At these words, and whilst the shopkeeper and Rigolette were debating the prices of different articles, Rodolph looked more attentively at the piece of furniture which Mother Bouvard had pointed out. It was one of those old secretaries of rosewood, in shape nearly triangular, shut in by a panel in front, which, thrown back, and supported by two long hinges of brass, could be used as a writing-desk. In the middle of the panel, inlaid with different coloured wood, Rodolph noticed a cipher in ebony, of an M. and R. interlaced, and surmounted by the coronet of a count. He imagined its last possessor to belong to an elevated class of society. His curiosity increased; he examined the secretary with renewed attention; he opened mechanically the drawers, one after the other, when, finding some difficulty in opening the last, and seeking the cause, he discovered and drew out carefully a sheet of paper, partly entangled between the drawer and the bottom of the secretary. While Rigolette was finishing her purchases with Mother Bouvard, Rodolph narrowly scrutinized the paper; from the many erasures, it was easily to be seen that it was an unfinished copy of a letter. Rodolph, with difficulty, read as follows:—

"Sir,—Be assured that misfortunes the most frightful could alone compel me to address you. It is not from ill-placed pride I feel these scruples, but the absolute want of any claim to the service I dare to ask of you. The sight of my daughter, reduced, like myself, to the most painful privation, urges me to the task. A few words will explain the cause of the misfortunes which overwhelm me. After the death of my husband, there remained to me a fortune of three hundred thousand francs, placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, notary. I received at Angers, where I had retired with my daughter, the interest of this sum in remittances from my brother. You remember, sir, the frightful event that put an end to his existence; ruined, as it appeared, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he destroyed himself, eight months since. Before this melancholy event, I received from him a few lines, written in despair, in which he said, when I read them he should have ceased to exist; he finished by informing me that he possessed no document relative to the sum placed in my name with M. Jacques Ferrand, as that individual never gave a receipt, but was honour and goodness itself, and it would only be necessary for me to call on him for the affair to be satisfactorily arranged. As soon as I could possibly turn my attention to anything but the fearful death of my brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one but yourself, sir, and that indirectly, by business you had had with my husband. I told you that the sum placed with M. Jacques Ferrand comprised the whole of my fortune, and that my brother sent me, every six months, the interest derived from that sum. More than a year having passed since the last payment, I consequently called on the notary, to demand that of which I stood greatly in want. Scarcely had I made myself known, than, without respecting my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed from him two thousand francs, which he had entirely lost by his death; adding, that not only was his suicide a crime towards God and man, but that it was still further an act of dishonesty, of which he was the victim. This odious speech made me indignant. The upright conduct of my brother was well known; he had, it is true, without the knowledge of myself or his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations, but he died with his reputation unsullied, regretted by every one, and leaving no debts, saving that to his notary. I replied to M. Ferrand, that I authorised him to take instantly from the sum he had in his charge, of mine, the two thousand francs my brother was indebted to him. At these words he looked at me in a stupefied manner, and asked me of what money I spoke? 'The three hundred thousand francs, that my brother placed in your hands eighteen months since, sir; the interest of which you have remitted, through him,' said I, not comprehending his question. The notary shrugged up his shoulders, smiled in pity, as though my assertion was not true, and answered me that, so far from having placed money with him, he had borrowed two thousand francs.

"It is impossible to explain to you my terror at this answer. 'But what, then, has become of this sum?' asked I. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource; if it be taken from us, there remains but the greatest misery. What will become of us?' 'I know nothing about it,' said the notary, coolly; 'it is most likely that your brother, instead of placing this sum with me, as he told you, made use of it in those unfortunate speculations to which he gave himself up, without the knowledge of any one.' 'It is false! it is infamous, sir!' I exclaimed, 'my brother was honour's self. Far from despoiling myself and child, he sacrificed himself to us. He would never marry, that he might leave all he possessed to my child.' 'Dare you assume, then, madame, that I am capable of denying a trust reposed in me?' asked the notary, with an indignation so apparently honourable and sincere, that I replied: 'No, sir; without doubt, your reputation for probity is well known; but, notwithstanding, I cannot accuse my brother of so cruel an abuse of confidence.' 'Upon what ground do you found this demand on me?' asked M. Ferrand. 'None, sir; eighteen months since, my brother, who took upon himself the management of my affairs, wrote to me, saying: 'I have an excellent opportunity of realising six per cent.—send me your warrant of attorney; I will deposit three hundred thousand francs, which I have concluded about, with M. Ferrand, the notary.' I sent the power of attorney; and a few days after, he informed me, that he had

effected the deposit with you, but that you never gave receipts; and, at the end of six months, he sent me the interest of that sum.' 'At least then, you have letters from him on this subject, madame?' 'No, sir; as they related only to business, I did not preserve them.' 'I, unhappily, madame, know nothing of all this,' replied the notary; 'if my character was not above all suspicion, all attack, I should say to you, the law is open to you, proceed against me; the judges will have to choose between an honourable man, who, for thirty years, has enjoyed the esteem of persons of consideration, and the posthumous declaration of a man, who, after ruining himself in the most hazardous speculations, found refuge only in suicide. In short, I say to you now, attack me, madame, if you dare, and the memory of your brother will be dishonoured! But I should think that you will have the good sense to be resigned to a misfortune, doubtless very great, but to which I am a stranger.' 'But, sir, I am a mother! if my fortune is lost to me, my daughter and myself have only the resource of some furniture: that sold, there remains but misery, sir, appalling misery!' 'You have, unfortunately, been cheated —I can do nothing,' replied the notary. 'Again, I tell you, madame, your brother deceived you. If you hesitate between my word and his, proceed against me—the law is open to you—I abide by its decision.' I left the office of the notary, in the deepest despair. What remained for me to do in this extremity? Without any document to prove the validity of my claim, convinced of the strict honesty of my brother, confounded by the assurance of M. Ferrand, having no one from whom I could ask advice (for you were still travelling), knowing that money was necessary to have the opinion of counsel, and wishing carefully to preserve the little which was left to me, I dared not undertake the commencement of a law-suit. It was then ——"

This copy of a letter ended here, for erasures, not decipherable, covered some lines which followed; at last, at the bottom, in a corner of the page, Rodolph read the following memorandum:—

"*To write to the Duchess de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy.*"

Rodolph remained thoughtful after the perusal of this fragment of a letter, in which he had found two names whose connexion struck him. Although the additional infamy with which M. Ferrand appeared to be accused, was not proved, this man had shown himself so pitiless towards the unfortunate Morel, so infamous to Louise, his daughter, that a denial of the deposit, protected as he was from certain discovery, did not appear strange, coming from such a wretch. This mother, who claimed a fortune which had so strangely disappeared, no doubt accustomed to the comforts of life, was ruined by a blow so sudden: knowing no one at Paris, as the letter said, what could now be the existence of these two females, deprived of everything, alone in the midst of this immense city!

The prince had, as we know, promised to Madame d'Harville *some intrigue*, which he hazarded for the purpose of occupying her mind, and a part to perform in some future work of charity, feeling certain of finding, before his again meeting the marquise, some grief to assuage: he trusted that perhaps chance might throw in his path some worthy unfortunate person, who could, agreeably to his project, interest the heart and imagination of Madame d'Harville. The wording of the letter that he held in his hands, a copy of which, without doubt, had never been sent to the person from whom assistance was implored, showed a character proud and resigned, to whom the offer of charity would be no doubt repugnant. In that case, what precautions and delicate deceptions would be necessary to hide the source of a generous succour, or to make it acceptable! And then, what address to be introduced to this lady, so that you might judge if she really merited the interest it seemed the ought to inspire! Rodolph foresaw a crowd of emotions, new, curious, and touching, which ought singularly to amuse Madame d'Harville, as he had promised her.

"Well, *husband*," said Rigolette, gaily, "what is that scrap of paper you are reading?"

"My little *wife*," answered Rodolph, "you are very curious. I will tell you presently. Have you concluded your purchases?"

"Certainly, and your poor friends will be established like kings. There remains only to pay. Madame Bouvard is very accommodating, it must be allowed."

"My little *wife*, an idea has just struck me; while I am paying, will you go and choose clothing for Madame Morel and her children; I confess my ignorance on the subject of such purchases. You can tell them to bring the things here, as there need be but one journey, and the poor people will have all at the same time."

"You are always right, *husband*. Wait for me, I shall not be long; I know two shopkeepers with whom I always deal, and I shall find there all that I want." And Rigolette went out, saying: "Madame Bouvard, I trust my *husband* to you; do not at least make love to him." And laughing, the merry maiden hastily disappeared.

"Indeed, sir," said Madame Bouvard to Rodolph, after the departure of Rigolette, "you must allow that you possess a famous little manager. She understands well how to buy; and then, so pretty! Red and white, with beautiful large black eyes, and hair to match!"

"Is she not charming, and am I not a happy husband, Madame Bouvard?"

"As happy a husband as she is a wife, I am quite sure."

"You are not mistaken there; but tell me, how much do I owe you?"

"Your little lady would not go beyond three hundred and thirty francs, for all. As there is a heaven above, I only clear fifteen francs, for I did not buy them so cheaply as I might; I had not the heart to bate them down, the people who sold them appeared so very unhappy!"

"Indeed! were they not the same persons of whom you bought the little secretary?"

"Yes, sir; and it breaks my heart only to think of it. There came here, the day before yesterday, a lady, still young and beautiful, but so pale and thin, that it gave you pain to see her. Although she was, as they say, neat and clean, her old threadbare black worsted shawl, her black stuff gown, also much worn and frayed, her straw bonnet in the month of January, for she was in mourning, proclaimed what is termed a *shabby genteel* appearance, for I am sure she was very respectable. At length she inquired, with a blush, if I would purchase two beds complete, and an old secretary. I replied, that as I sold

I must buy, and that if they suited me, I would have them. She then begged me to go with her, not far from here, on the other side of the street, to a house on the quay of the Canal Saint-Martin. I left my shop in charge of my niece, and followed the lady. We came to a shabby-looking house, quite at the bottom of a court; we went up to the fourth-story, the lady knocked, and a young girl of fourteen opened the door; she was also in mourning, and equally pale and thin, but, in spite of this, beautiful as the day —so beautiful, that I was enraptured!"

"Well, and this young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Although so cold, she had on nothing more than a black cotton dress with white spots, and a little black shawl quite worn out."

"And their lodging was wretched?"

"Imagine, sir, too little rooms, very clean, but almost empty, and so cold that I was almost frozen; a fire-place where you could not perceive the least appearance of ashes, as if there had not been a fire for a long time. The whole of the furniture consisted of two beds, two chairs, a chest of drawers, an old trunk, and a little secretary. Upon the trunk was a bundle in a handkerchief. This bundle was all that remained to the mother and daughter, when once their furniture was sold. The landlord selected the two bedsteads, the chairs, trunk, and table, for what they were indebted to him, as the porter said who came up with us. When the lady begged me to put a fair value on the mattress, sheets, curtains, and blankets, on the faith of an honest woman, sir, although I live by purchasing cheaply, and selling dearly, when I saw the poor young lady, her eyes filled with tears, and her mother, in spite of her calmness, appearing to weep inwardly, I estimated them within fifteen francs of their value to sell again, I assure you; I even consented, to oblige them, to take the little secretary, although it is not in my way of business."

"I will buy it of you, Madame Bouvard."

"Will you though? So much the better, sir; it would have remained on my hands a long time, and I only took it to serve the lady. I then told her what I would give for the things, and I expected she would ask me more than I had offered; but, no, she said not a word about it. This still more satisfied me she was no common person; *genteel poverty*, sir, be assured. I then asked: 'Is that enough?' She answered: 'It is; now let us return to your shop, and you can then pay me, as I shall not come back again to this house.' Then, speaking to her daughter, who was sitting on the trunk, crying, she said: 'Claire, take the bundle.' I remember the name well. The young lady rose up; but, in passing by the side of the little secretary, she threw herself on her knees before it, and began to sob. 'Courage, my child, they are looking at us,' said her mother, in a low tone, but yet I heard her. You can understand, sir, they are poor but proud people. When the lady gave me the key of the little secretary, I noticed a tear in her eyes; her heart seemed breaking at parting with the old piece of furniture; but she still tried to preserve her calmness and dignity before strangers. She then gave the porter to understand that I was to take away all the landlord did not keep, and afterwards we returned here. The young lady gave her arm to her mother, and carried in her hand the little bundle which contained their all. I paid them three hundred and fifteen francs, and have not since seen them."

"But their name?"

"I do not know: the lady sold me the things in the presence of the porter; I had not the necessity to ask her name, as what she sold belonged to herself."

"But their new abode?"

"That, also, I do not know."

"Perhaps they can inform me at their old lodging?"

"No, sir; for when I returned to fetch away the things, the porter said, speaking of the mother and daughter: 'They are very quiet people, but very unhappy; some misfortunes have happened to them. They always appeared calm; but I am sure they were in a state of despair.' 'And where are they going to lodge at this late hour?' I asked him. 'In truth, I know nothing, answered he; 'it is, however, quite certain they will not return here.'"

The hopes that Rodolph had entertained for a moment vanished. How could he discover these two unhappy females, having only as a clue the name of the young girl, Claire, and the fragment of a letter, of which we have spoken, at the bottom of which were the words: *To write to Madame de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy.*"

The only chance, and that was a very faint one, of tracing these unfortunates, rested in Madame de Lucenay, who, fortunately, was on intimate terms with Madame d'Harville.

"Here, madame, pay yourself," said Rodolph to the shopkeeper, giving her a note for five hundred francs.

"I will give you the difference, sir."

"Where can I engage a cart to carry the things?"

"If it be not very far, a large truck will be sufficient; Father Jerome has one, quite close by; I always employ him. What is your address?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Rue du Temple, No. 17. Yes, yes, I know the house."

"You have, then, been there?"

"Many times. First, I bought some clothes of a pawnbroker who lived there. It is true, she did not carry on a large business, but that was no affair of mine; she sold, I bought, and we were equal. Another time, not six months ago, I went again for the furniture of a young man who lived on the fourth-story, and who was going to remove."

"M. François Germain, perhaps?" said Rodolph.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Very well. Unhappily, he has not left in the Rue du Temple his present address, and I do not know where to find him."

"If that be all, I can remove the difficulty."

"You know where he lives?"

"Not exactly; but I know where you will be sure to meet with him."

"Where is that?"

"At a notary's where he is employed."

"At a notary's?"

"Yes; who lives in the Rue du Sentier."

"M. Jacques Ferrand!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"The same! a worthy man; he has a crucifix and some holy wood in his office, which reminds one of a sacristy."

"But how do you know that M. Germain is with the notary?"

"Why, in this way. The young man came to me, and proposed that I should buy all his furniture; although not in my way of business,

I agreed, and afterwards retailed them here; for, as it suited the young man, I did not like to refuse. Well, then, I bought him clean out, and paid him a good price; he was, doubtless, satisfied with me, for, at the end of a fortnight he came to buy a bedstead and bedding. He brought with him a truck and a porter; they packed up all; but just as he was about to pay, he found he had forgotten his purse. He appeared such an honest young man, that I said to him: 'Take the things with you, all the same; I will call for the money.' 'Very well,' he said, 'but I am seldom at home; call, therefore, to-morrow, in the Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, the notary, where I am employed, and I will then pay you.' I went the next day, and he paid me; only what I thought so odd was, his selling me all his goods, and buying others in a fortnight after."

Rodolph thought he could account for the cause of this singularity. Germain, wishing that the wretches who pursued him should lose all traces of him, had sold his goods, thinking that if he removed them it might give a clue to his new abode, and had preferred, to avoid this evil, purchasing others, and taking them himself to his lodgings. Rodolph started with joy, when he thought of the happiness for Madame Georges, who was at last about to see this son, so long and vainly sought.

Rigolette now returned with joyful eyes and smiling lips.

"Well, did I not tell you!" she exclaimed. "I was not wrong; we have spent, in all, six hundred and forty francs, and the Morels will be established like princes. See! the shopkeepers are coming: are they not loaded? Nothing is wanted for the use of the family—even to a gridiron, two beautiful saucepans newly tinned, and a coffee-pot. I said to myself, since everything is to be had, it shall be so; and, besides all that, I have spent three hours. But make haste and pay, neighbour, and let us go. It is almost noon, and my needle must go at a pretty rate to overtake this morning!"

Rodolph paid, and left the Temple with Rigolette.

At the moment that the grisette and her companion entered the passage of the house, they were almost thrown down by Madame Pipelet, who was running out, troubled, frightened, aghast.

"Gracious heaven!" said Rigolette, "what is the matter with you, Madame Pipelet? Where are you running to in that manner?"

"Is that you, Mademoiselle Rigolette?" exclaimed Anastasie. "Providence has sent you. Help me! save the life of Alfred!"

"What do you say?"

"That poor old darling has fainted! Have pity upon us! run and fetch two sous-worth of absinthe—very strong; that is his remedy when he is indisposed in the pylorus. Be kind; do not refuse me, and I can return to Alfred. I am quite confused!"

Rigolette left the arm of Rodolph, and ran off to the dram-shop.

"But what has happened, Madame Pipelet?" asked Rodolph, following the portress, who returned to the lodge.

"How should I know, my worthy sir? I left home to go to the mayor's, the church, and the cook-shop, to prevent Alfred from tiring himself. I returned; what did I see?—the dear old man with his legs and arms all in the air! Look, M. Rodolph!" said Anastasie, opening the door of the room, "is not that a sight to break one's heart?"

Lamentable spectacle! With his enormous hat still on his head, even further on than usual, for the questionable *castor*, pushed down, no doubt, by violence, if we may judge by a transverse gap, covered M. Pipelet's eyes, who was on his back on the floor, at the foot of his bed.

The fainting was over, and Alfred was beginning to make some slight movements with his hands, as though he wished to repulse some one or some thing; and then he tried to remove his troublesome visor.

"He kicks! that is a good sign; he recovers!" cried the portress — and, stooping down, she bawled in his ears: "What is the matter with my Alfred? It is his 'Stasie who is here. How are you now? They are going to bring you some absinthe; that will put you to rights." Then, assuming a caressing tone of voice, she added: "They have, then, abused you, killed you, my dear old darling—eh?"

Alfred sighed deeply, and with a groan uttered the fatal word: "Cabrion!" And his trembling hands seemed as though desirous of repulsing a frightful vision.

"Cabrion! that devil of a painter again!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet. "Alfred all night dreamed so much about him, that he kicked me dreadfully. That monster is his nightmare! Not only has he poisoned his days, but his nights also; he persecutes him even in his sleep—yes, sir, as though Alfred was a malefactor; and this Cabrion, whom may the devil confound! is his remorseless enemy."

Rodolph smiled, as he discreetly traced some new trick on the part of the former neighbour of Rigolette.

"Alfred, answer me; do not remain dumb—you alarm me," said Madame Pipelet; "let us get you up. Why will you think on that beggarly fellow? You know that, when you think of him, it has the same effect on you as when you eat cabbage—it fills up your pylorus, and stifles you!"

"Cabrion!" repeated M. Pipelet, lifting with difficulty his hat from his eyes, which he rolled about with a frightened air.

Rigolette entered, carrying a small bottle of absinthe.

"Thank you, mademoiselle; you are very kind," said the old woman. Then she added: "Here, darling, swallow this; it will bring you to yourself."

And Anastasie, presenting the phial quickly to the lips of M. Pipelet, insisted on his swallowing the contents. Alfred in vain struggled courageously: his wife, profiting by the weakness of her victim, held his head with a firm grasp in one hand, and with the other introduced the neck of the phial between his teeth, and forced him to drink the absinthe; after which she cried triumphantly: "Well done! you are again on your *pins*, my cherished one!"

Alfred (after having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand) opened his eyes, stood up, and asked, in a trembling voice: "Have you seen him?"

"Who?"

"Is he gone?"

"Alfred, whom do you mean?"

"Cabrion!"

"Has he dared ——" cried the portress.

M. Pipelet, as dumb as the statue of the Com-

mander, in *Don Giovanni*, bowed his head twice in the affirmative.

"M. Cabrion! has he been here?" asked Rigolette, restraining with difficulty an inclination to laugh.

"That monster! has he been let loose upon Alfred?" cried Madame Pipelet. "Oh, if I had been here with my broom, he should have eaten it up, to the very handle! But speak, Alfred; relate to us this horrible affair."

Pipelet made a sign with his hand, that he was about to speak, and they listened to the man of the immense hat in religious silence, whilst he expressed himself in these terms, with a voice deeply agitated: "My wife had just left me to complete the orders given by you, sir (bowing to Rodolph), to call at the mayor's, the church, and the cook-shop ——"

"The dear old man had the nightmare all night, and I wished him to rest," said Anastasie.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from above," said the porter, solemnly. "I had dreamed of Cabrion—I was to suffer by Cabrion. Here was I sitting quietly before the table, thinking of an alteration that I wished to make in this boot confided to me, when I heard a noise, a rustling at the window of my lodge—was it a presentiment—a warning from above? My heart beat; I raised my head, and through the window I saw—I saw ——"

"Cabrion!" cried Anastasie, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" replied M. Pipelet, in a hollow tone. "His hideous face was there, close to the window, looking at me with his cat's eyes—what do I say?—tiger's eyes!—just as in my dream. I tried to speak, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth; I would have risen—I was glued to my seat; the boot fell from my hands, and, as in every critical and important event of my life, I remained completely motionless. Then the key turned in the lock; the door opened, and Cabrion entered!"

"He entered? what effrontery!" said Madame Pipelet, as much astonished as her husband, at the audacity.

"I still remained motionless on my chair; Cabrion still advanced slowly, his looks fixed on me, as the serpent glares on the bird, for he made me tremble: and, in spite of myself, I gazed on him. He came quite close to me; I could no longer endure his revolting aspect, it was too much, I could hold out no longer. I shut my eyes, and I then felt that he dared to put his hands on my hat, took it slowly off my head, and left it naked. I was seized with giddiness—my breathing was suspended—a ringing came in my ears—I was more than ever glued to my seat—I shut my eyes more firmly. Then Cabrion stooped, took my bald head between his hands, cold as death, and upon my forehead, bathed in sweat, imprinted a lascivious kiss!"

Anastasie lifted her arms towards heaven.

"My most inveterate enemy kissed my forehead! A monstrosity so unparalleled overcame and paralysed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to replace my hat on my head; then, with a blow on the crown, thrust it over my eyes, as you saw. This last outrage quite overpowered me—the measure was full; everything about me turned round, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under the rim of my hat, leave the room as quietly and slowly as he had entered."

Then, as though this recital had exhausted his strength, M. Pipelet fell back on his chair, raising his hands to heaven in the attitude of mute imprecation. Rigolette left the room suddenly; her desire to laugh almost stifled her, and she could no longer restrain herself. Rodolph himself had with difficulty preserved his gravity.

Suddenly, a confused murmur, such as announces the assembling of a multitude, was heard in the street; a tumultuous noise came from the entrance of the passage, and then the crossing of bayonets sounded on the step of the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARREST.

"GRACIOUS heaven, M. Rodolph!" cried Rigolette, running back, pale and trembling; "here are a commissary of police and the guard!"

"Divine justice watches over me!" said M. Pipelet, in a burst of religious gratitude; "they come to arrest Cabrion! Unhappily, it is too late!"

A commissary of police, recognised by a scarf worn under his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was grave, dignified, and severe.

"Monsieur le Commissaire, you are too late; the malefactor has fled!" said M. Pipelet, sadly; "but I can give you his description. Villanous smile, impudent manners ——"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the officer.

"Of Cabrion, Monsieur le Commissaire, and if you make all haste, there may be yet time to get hold of him," answered M. Pipelet.

"I do not know who this Cabrion is," said the officer, impatiently: "Does Jérome Morel, working-lapidary live in this house?"

"Yes, sir," said Madame Pipelet, putting herself into a military attitude.

"Conduct me to his apartment."

"Morel the lapidary!" resumed the portress, quite surprised; "he is gentle as a lamb, and incapable of ——"

"Jérome Morel! does he live here or not?"

"He does live here, sir, with his family, in the attic."

"Show me, then, to this garret."

Then addressing himself to a man who accompanied him, the magistrate said: "Let the two municipal guards wait below, and not leave the alley. Send Justin for a coach." The man left to execute these orders.

"Now," said the magistrate, addressing M. Pipelet, "conduct me to Morel."

"If it be all the same to you, sir, I will go instead of Alfred, who is indisposed from the persecution of Cabrion; who, just as cabbage does, troubles his pylorus."

"You, or your husband, it matters little which—go on;" and, preceded by Madame Pipelet, he began to ascend the stairs; but he soon stopped, perceiving that he was followed by Rodolph and Rigolette.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded he.

"They are the two lodgers on the fourth-story," said Madame Pipelet.

"Pardon me, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he to Rodolph; who, augurring well from the politeness of the magistrate, said: "You will find a family in great distress, sir; I do not know what new mi-

fortune menaces the unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried last night; one of his children, worn out by illness, is dead beneath his eyes—dead from cold and misery."

"Is it possible?"

"It is the truth," said Madame Pipelet. "If it had not been for the gentleman who now speaks to you, and who is a king of lodgers, for he has saved, by his goodness, poor Morel from prison, the whole family of the lapidary must have died of hunger."

The commissary looked at Rodolph with as much interest as surprise.

"Nothing is more simple, sir," replied he. "A person who is very charitable, knowing that Morel, to whose worth I pledge my honour, was in a position as deplorable as it was unmerited, instructed me to pay a bill of exchange, for which the bailiffs were about to drag to prison this poor man, the sole support of a large family."

Struck in his turn by the noble appearance of Rodolph, and the dignity of his manners, the magistrate replied: "I do not doubt the probity of Morel; I only regret being compelled to fulfil a painful duty before you, sir, who have shown so lively an interest in this family."

"What can you mean, sir?"

"After the services you have rendered the Morels, and from your language, I know that you are a worthy man. Having, besides, no reason to conceal the object of the mandate I am about to execute, I will acknowledge, that I am about to arrest Louise Morel, the daughter of the lapidary."

The remembrance of the rouleau of gold, offered to the bailiffs by the young girl, occurred to the mind of Rodolph.

"Of what is she accused?"

"Of child-murder."

"She!—she! Oh! her poor father!"

"From what you have informed me, sir, I apprehend that, under the sad circumstances in which the artisan is placed, this fresh blow will be terrible to him. Unhappily, I am bound to obey the instructions I have received."

"But it is only an accusation," said Rodolph; "the proofs are wanting, doubtless?"

"I cannot explain myself more on the subject; justice has been put on the path of crime, or rather on the presumption, by the declaration of a man, credible in every respect—the master of Louise Morel."

"Jacques Ferrand, the notary?" said Rodolph, indignantly.

"Yes, sir——"

"M. Jacques Ferrand is a wretch, sir!"

"I am vexed to see that you do not know him of whom you speak, sir. M. Jacques Ferrand is one of the most honorable men in the world; he is of extreme piety, and of a probity acknowledged by all."

"I repeat, sir, that the notary is a wretch! He sought to imprison Morel, because his daughter repulsed his infamous proposals. If Louise is accused on the denunciation of such a man, you must own, sir, that the accusation merits little belief."

"It does not belong to me, sir, and I am glad of it, to discuss the value of the declarations of M. Ferrand," said the magistrate, coldly. "Justice is informed of this affair, and it is for the tribunal to decide. As for me, I have a warrant to apprehend the person of Louise Morel, and I must execute the mandate."

"You are right, sir; I regret that a feeling of indignation, perhaps legitimate, made me forget that, in fact, this is neither the time nor the place for discussion. One word only: the body of the child that Morel has lost remains in the garret: I offered my room to the family, to spare them the sad spectacle of the corpse; it is therefore in my room that you will probably find the lapidary and his daughter. I entreat you, sir, in the name of humanity, not to suddenly arrest Louise in the midst of this unhappy family, who are but just snatched from a frightful fate. Morel has received so many shocks during the past night, that his reason will no longer hold; his wife is also dangerously ill, and such a blow would kill her!"

"Sir, I have always executed my orders with all the circumspection possible, and I shall not, in this instance, depart from my usual custom."

"If you would permit me, sir, to beg of you a favour, this is what I would propose: the young girl who follows us with the portress, occupies a room next to mine; I do not doubt but that she will place it at your disposal. You can first call Louise in there, then, if necessary, Morel can come in, and take leave of her. You will thus spare a poor, infirm, and invalid mother a scene so distressing."

"If it can be so arranged, sir, I am quite willing."

The conversation we have repeated, took place in a low tone, while Rigolette and Madame Pipelet remained at a respectful distance from the magistrate and Rodolph, who, coming near the grisette, whom the presence of the magistrate had caused to tremble with fright, said to her: "My poor neighbour, I want from you another favour: you must allow me to dispose of your room for an hour."

"As long as you please, M. Rodolph, you have the key; but pray tell me, what does it all mean?"

"I will inform you by and by. But I have something further to beg of you: you must be good enough to return to the Temple, and say, they must not bring the things for the next hour."

"Willingly, M. Rodolph; but has any new misfortune happened to the Morels?"

"Alas! yes; there has occurred to them something very sad, and which you will know too soon."

"Well, then, neighbour, I will run to the Temple. Alas! and I, thanks to you, believed these good people out of trouble!" said the grisette, who then rapidly descended the stairs.

Rodolph wished, above all, to spare Rigolette the sad scene of Louise Morel's arrest.

"Sir," said Madame Pipelet to the magistrate, "since my king of lodgers conducts you, I can return to Alfred. I am uneasy about him, as he had scarcely recovered from the visit of Cabrion."

"Go, go," said the magistrate, who remained alone with Rodolph.

Both ascended to the landing, facing the door of the room where the lapidary and his family were for the present established. Suddenly this door opened; and poor Louise, pale and in tears, rushed from the room.

"Adieu, adieu, my dear father!" cried she, "I will return, but I must go now."

"Louise, my child, listen to me," replied Morel, following his daughter, and trying to detain her.

At the sight of Rodolph and the magistrate, Louise and the lapidary remained motionless.

"Ah, sir, you, our benefactor!" said the artisan, "assist me in preventing Louise from going away. I know not what ails her, but she terrifies me, for she will go. Is there, sir, any necessity for her returning to her master? Did you not say to me: 'Louise will not again leave you, she shall be your recompense!' Oh! at that kind promise, I own that, at the moment, I forgot the death of my poor little Adèle; but, I must never more be separated from thee, Louise—never, never!"

The heart of Rodolph was bursting; he had not the strength to answer a word. The commissary said severely to Louise: "Is your name Louise Morel?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young girl, amazed and overcome.

Rodolph had opened the door of Rigolette's room.

"You are Jeromé Morel, her father?" added the officer, addressing the lapidary.

"Yes, sir; but——"

"Enter there with your daughter;" and the magistrate pointed to the room, into which Rodolph had already entered.

Reassured by his preserver's presence, the lapidary and Louise, astonished and uneasy, obeyed the command of the commissary, who shut the door, and said to Morel with much feeling: "I know how worthy you are, and how unhappy; it is, therefore, with regret, I acquaint you that, in the name of the law, I come to arrest your daughter."

"All is discovered—I am lost!" shrieked Louise, and throwing herself into the arms of her father.

"What do you say? what do you say?" asked Morel, stupefied. "You are mad—how lost? Arrest you! why arrest you? who has come to arrest you?"

"I, in the name of the law!" and the commissary showed his scarf.

"Oh! wretched, wretched girl!" cried Louise, falling on her knees.

"What! in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose reason, severely shaken by this new blow, began to totter: "Why arrest my daughter in the name of the law? I will answer for Louise: she is my daughter, my worthy daughter! Is it not so, Louise? Why arrest you, when our good angel has restored you to us, as a consolation for the death of my poor Adèle? No, no, that can never be! And again, sir, speaking with all due respect, they arrest only the guilty, you know, and Louise, my daughter, is not guilty. So, you see, my child, this gentleman is in error. I am called Morel, but there may be another Morel; you are called Louise, but there is more than one Louise. That is it, you see, sir; there is an error, certainly some error!"

"There is, unhappily, no mistake!—Louise Morel, take leave of your father."

"What! you will take away my daughter?" cried the lapidary, furious with grief, and approaching the magistrate in a menacing manner.

Rodolph seized the lapidary by the arm, and said to him: "Calm yourself, and hope for the best; your daughter will be restored to you—her innocence will be proved—she cannot be guilty."

"Guilty of what? She cannot be guilty of anything. I would stake my existence——"

Then remembering the gold that Louise had brought to pay the bill of exchange, Morel exclaimed: "But that money! that money you had this morning, Louise?" And he cast on his child a look of terror.

Louise understood it.

"I steal!" cried she, and her cheeks, suffused with indignation, her tone and gesture, reassured her father.

"I knew it well!" he cried. "You see, sir, she denies it; and in her life, she never told a lie, I assure you. Ask all those who know her, and they will confirm what I say. She tell a lie! Oh, no, she is too proud for that! Besides, the bill of exchange was paid by our benefactor. That gold, she will not keep it; she is going to restore it to the person who lent it to her, and who forbid her naming who it was. Is it not so, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"But of what, then, can they accuse her? I, her father, swear to you, that whatever it may be that she is accused of, she is innocent; and in my whole life I also have never uttered a lie."

"To what purpose can the knowledge of this accusation tend?" said Rodolph, moved by his grief; "the innocence of Louise will be proved—the person who interests herself for you will protect your daughter. Come, courage!—again Providence will not fail you. Embrace your daughter; you will soon see her again."

"Sir," said Morel to the magistrate, without listening to Rodolph, they do not take a child from her father without at least telling him of what she is accused! I would know all. Louise, why do you not speak?"

"Your daughter is accused of infanticide!" said the magistrate.

"I—I—I do not understand—I—you——" and Morel, aghast, muttered a few incoherent words.

"Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the commissary, deeply moved by this scene; "but it is not yet proved that she has committed that crime."

"Oh, no, I have not, sir! it is not so!" shrieked Louise, with energy, and rising from her knees; "I assure you it was dead. It did not breathe—it was cold. I was delirious—that is all my crime? But, kill my child?—oh, never, never!"

"Your child, abandoned wretch?" cried Morel, raising his two hands over Louise, as though he would annihilate her with this gesture and terrible imprecation.

"Mercy, father! mercy!" she exclaimed.

After a moment of fearful silence, Morel spoke with a calmness still more fearful: "Monsieur le Commissaire, take away that creature—she is not my daughter!"

The lapidary would have left the room. Louise threw herself at his knees, which she embraced with both arms; and, her head thrown back, desperate and supplicating, she cried: "Father, hear me! only hear me!"

"Monsieur le Commissaire, take her away! I abandon her to you!" said the lapidary, making an effort to disengage himself from the embraces of Louise.

"Hear what she has to say," said Rodolph; "do not be unpitying."

"She, she!" repeated Morel, putting his hands to his forehead; "she, who is so dishonoured!—oh, infamy! infamy!"

"And if she were dishonoured to save you?" said Rodolph to him, in a low voice.

These words made a dreadful impression on Morel; he looked on his weeping daughter, still kneeling at his feet; then with a searching look, impossible to describe, he exclaimed, in a hollow voice, his teeth clenched with rage: "The notary?"

An answer rose to the lips of Louise; she was going to speak, but suddenly stopped, and bowed her head in silence.

"But, no; he would have imprisoned me this morning!" continued Morel, with a burst of violence. "It is not he! Oh! so much the better, so much the better! She has not even an excuse for her crime! I have had nothing to do with her dishonour, and I can curse her without remorse!"

"No, no! do not curse me, father! To you I will tell all—to you alone! and you will see whether or not I merit your pardon."

"In pity, listen to her," said Rodolph.

"What will she tell me—of her infamy? It will be made public. I can wait ——"

"Sir," cried Louise, addressing the magistrate, "in pity, let me say a few words to my father before I leave him, perhaps for ever; and before you, sir, our saviour, I will also speak; but only to you and my father."

"I consent," said the magistrate.

"Are you, then, devoid of all feeling? Will you refuse your child this last consolation?" asked Rodolph of Morel. "If you think you owe me any gratitude for the kindness I have shewn you, do not turn a deaf ear to the prayer of your child."

After a moment of wild and sullen silence, Morel answered: "Let us go."

"But where shall we go?" asked Rodolph; "your family are in the other room."

"Where shall we go?" exclaimed the lapidary, with bitter irony. "Where shall we go?" Above—above, into the garret, by the side of the corpse of my child—a fitting place for such a confession, is it not? Come, we will see if Louise dares to lie before her dead sister. Come!"

And Morel quitted the room hurriedly, with a wild air, and without looking at Louise.

"Sir," said the commissary to Rodolph, in an undertone, "in mercy to the poor father, do not prolong this conversation. You say truly, his reason will not long hold out; just now he looked almost mad."

"Alas, sir, I fear, like yourself, a new and terrible misfortune. I will shorten as much as I can, this painful farewell." And Rodolph rejoined the lapidary and his daughter.

Strange and painful as appeared the determination of Morel, it was the only course, under the circumstances, that could be taken. The magistrate consented to await the issue of this conversation in Rigolette's room. Morel's family occupied Rodolph's apartment, and there remained only the garret. It was to this dismal room that Louise, her father, and Rodolph repaired.

Sad and afflicting sight! In the middle of the garret, such as we have already described it, there lay, on the bed of the idiot, the body of the little girl who had died that morning, covered with a ragged sheet. An unusually clear light, reflected through the narrow skylight, threw the figures of the three actors in this scene into bold relief. Rodolph, standing up, and leaning against the wall, was painfully moved. Morel, sitting on the edge of his work-bench, his head bowed, his hands hanging listlessly down, his looks, fixed and wild, were rivetted to the mattress where lay the body of little Adèle. At this sight the wrath and indignation of the lapidary subsided, and were changed into a bitter and inexpressible sadness; his energy forsook him, he was utterly bowed down beneath this new blow. Louise, of a deathly paleness, felt her strength gone. The confession she was about to make terrified her; she, however, tremblingly took the hand of her father in her own—that poor hand, thin and deformed by excessive labour. The lapidary did not withdraw it; then his daughter, sobbing violently, covered it with her kisses, and felt the slight pressure of his lips in return. Morel's anger had ceased; his tears, long withheld, flowed at last.

"Oh, father! if you only knew!" cried Louise, "if you only knew how much I am to be pitied!"

"Oh, Louise! it will be the grief of my whole life," answered the lapidary, weeping. "You, you in prison, at the same bar with criminals! you, so proud when you had the right to be proud! No," added he, with a new burst of despairing grief, "no! I should prefer to see you dead, by the side of your poor sister!"

"And I too—would I were there!" answered Louise.

"Silence, unhappy girl! you make me shudder. I was wrong to say that; I went too far. Come, speak, but in the name of God, do not lie; however frightful the truth may be, let me know all—let me learn it from you, for it will seem less cruel. Speak, for, alas! our moments are counted—they are *waiting for you* below. Oh, merciful Heaven! what a sad, sad adieu!"

"Father, I will tell you all," said Louise, taking courage; "but, promise me—and you, our benefactor, promise me, also—not to repeat this to any one—to no one. If he knew that I had spoken —— Oh! added she, shivering with terror, "you would be lost, lost as I am, for you do not know the power and cruelty of that man!"

"Of what man?"

"My master ——"

"The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise, in a low whisper, and looking fearfully round her, as if she dreaded being overheard.

"Be not alarmed," replied Rodolph; "this man may be cruel and fearful, but we defy him! For the rest, if I disclose what you are about to tell us, it will be only for your interest, or that of your father."

"And I also, Louise, if I speak of it, it will be to save you! But what has he again done, this wicked man?"

"That is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection; "in my recital I shall have to speak of one who has rendered me a great service, who has been all kindness to my family; this person was employed at M. Ferrand's when first I went there, and he has made me promise not to disclose his name."

Rodolph thinking that it might, perhaps, refer to Germain, said to Louise: "If you mean François Germain, rest assured, his secret will be preserved equally by your father and myself."

Louise looked at Rodolph with surprise.

"Do you know him, sir?" said she.

"What! that good and excellent young man who lived here for three months, was employed

by the notary when you entered his service?" said Morel. "The first time you saw him here, you appeared as though you did not know him."

"That was agreed between us, for there existed good reasons to conceal that he was employed by M. Ferrand. It was I who told him there was a room to let here, knowing he would be a kind neighbour to you."

"But," asked Rodolph, "who then placed your daughter with the notary?"

"While my wife was ill, I said to Madame Burette (the woman who advances money on pledges), who lived here, that Louise wished to enter service, in order to assist us. Madame Burette knew the housekeeper of the notary; and she gave me a letter wherein she recommended Louise as an excellent girl. Cursed letter! it has caused all our unhappiness. Thus, sir, you see how it was my daughter went to the notary's."

"Although I am aware of some of the circumstances which have excited the hatred of M. Ferrand against your father," said Rodolph, "I wish you to relate, in as few words as possible, all that has passed between you and the notary, from the time you entered his service; it may, perhaps, serve to extenuate your conduct, and be of service hereafter."

"During the early part of the time I was with M. Ferrand," answered Louise, "I had no cause to complain of his conduct. I had a great deal of work, the housekeeper often treated me roughly, the house was very dull, but I bore all with patience; service is service, and elsewhere I might have had other disagreeables. M. Ferrand had a very stern countenance; he went to mass, and frequently received priests at his table. I did not mistrust him; for at first he scarcely looked at me, and spoke very sharply to me, particularly before strangers. Except the porter, who lived on the ground-floor, where the office was, I was the only servant except Madame Seraphin the housekeeper, on the side of the house we occupied; that between the court and garden being untenanted. My room was above all. I felt fearful in the evening, being always alone in the kitchen, which was underground, or in my own room. One day, I had sat up very late to finish some mending, wanted in haste; I was about to undress, when I heard footsteps moving softly in the little corridor, at the end of which my room was situated; some one stopped at my door. At first I imagined it was the housekeeper, but as no one entered, I felt afraid. I durst not move, but listened. However, I heard no one; I was, nevertheless, certain that some one was outside my door. I asked thrice, who was there, but no one answered. More and more alarmed, I pushed the chest of drawers against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened, nothing moved; at the end of half an hour, which appeared to me very long, I threw myself on the bed, and the night passed quietly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper if I might have a bolt to my door, and related to her my fright of the night before; she told me I must have been dreaming, and that I must first ask M. Ferrand about the bolt. He shrugged his shoulders at my request, told me I was silly, and I dared not again mention it. Some time after that, the unfortunate loss of the diamond happened. My father, in despair, knew not what to do. I told Madame Seraphin the distress I was in, and she replied: 'Master is very charitable; perhaps he will assist your father.' That same day, when I waited at table, M. Ferrand said to me, suddenly: 'Your father is in want of one thousand three hundred francs; go this evening, and tell him to come to-morrow to my office, and he shall have the money; he is an honest man, and merits assistance.' At this mark of goodness, I burst into tears. I knew not how sufficiently to thank my master, when he said to me, with his usual sharpness: 'Enough, enough, that which I have done is nothing uncommon.' That evening, after I had done my work, I came home to tell the good news to my father, and the next day ——"

"I had the one thousand three hundred francs, on giving him my blank acceptance at three months' date," said Morel. "I did the same as Louise; I wept with gratitude, calling this man my benefactor, my saviour. Oh, he must have been very wicked, thus to destroy the veneration and gratitude I had vowed to him!"

"Did not this precaution of making you sign a blank bill at so short a date that it would be impossible for you to meet it, excite your suspicions?" asked Rodolph.

"No, sir; I thought that the notary took it merely as collateral security; besides, he told me there was not any occasion to think of repaying him this sum before two years, and that every three months I was simply to renew the bill of exchange, as more regular and business-like. In the meantime, when it became due, it was presented here, and not being paid, they obtained judgment against me in the name of a third party; but he told me not to be uneasy, as it was an error of the officer in whose hands the writ of execution had been placed."

"He wished thus to keep you in his power," said Rodolph.

"Alas! yes, sir; for it was from the date of this judgment that he began. But, go on, Louise, go on; I know not where I am—my head is giddy—lost—I shall go mad! It is too much, too much to bear!"

Rodolph having succeeded in calming the lapidary, Louise resumed: "I redoubled my zeal, to endeavour to repay as much as I could the kindness of M. Ferrand. The housekeeper from that time conceived a great aversion to me, and she took every opportunity to spite me, by not giving me the orders of M. Ferrand, thus making it appear that I was always in fault. I endured these disagreeables, although I should have preferred another situation; but the obligation my father was under to my master, prevented my leaving. The money had been lent about three months, and though M. Ferrand continued this harshness towards me in the presence of Madame Seraphin, he would now sometimes look at me in a manner that embarrassed me very much, and when he saw that I blushed ——"

"You will understand, sir, that he was then in a situation to send me to prison."

"One day," rejoined Louise, "the housekeeper went out after dinner, contrary to her usual custom, and the clerks were dismissed from duty for the day; the porter was sent on an errand, and I remained alone in the house with my master. I was doing some needlework in a little antechamber, where I was within hearing, if wanted. After some time the bell of my master's bedroom rang. I went immediately, and upon entering, I found him standing before the fire. As I approached, he turned suddenly round, and caught me in his arms. Surprise

and terror hindered me at first from attempting to move; but although he was very strong, I struggled so violently that I made my escape, and took refuge in the antechamber, shut the door, and held it with all my strength. Unfortunately, the key was on the outside ——"

"You hear, sir, you hear," said Morel to Rodolph, "what was the conduct of this worthy benefactor!"

"At the end of a few moments, the door yielded to his efforts," continued Louise. "Happily, the lamp was within my reach, and I had time to extinguish it. The antechamber was at some distance from the place where he stood, and he therefore suddenly found himself in darkness. At last he called to me, and finding I did not answer, he then said, in a voice trembling with passion: 'If you attempt to escape me, your father shall go to prison for the one thousand three hundred francs that he owes me, and that he cannot pay.' I entreated him to have pity upon me. I promised to do all in my power to serve him faithfully, in acknowledgment of his kindness, but declared that nothing should force me to disgrace myself."

"That was always the language of Louise," said Morel, "of my Louise, when she had the right to be proud. But, go on, go on."

"I was still concealed by the darkness, when presently I heard the door closed which led from the antechamber, and which my master had contrived to find. Having me thus in his power, he ran to his room, and soon returned with a light. I dare not tell you, my dear father, the new struggle I had to sustain; he threatened, and followed me from room to room. Happily, fear, despair, and anger gave me strength. My resistance made him furious; he was no longer master of himself, and in his frenzied violence he struck me, and my face streamed with blood."

"My God, my God!" cried the lapidary, raising his hands to heaven, "are crimes like this to go unpunished?—shall such a monster as this escape the penalty of his misdeeds?"

"Believe me," cried Rodolph, who seemed lost in profound meditation, "the hour approaches when the hand of retributive justice shall be raised against this man. But," said he, addressing himself to Louise, "take courage, my poor girl, and relate all."

"This struggle had lasted for some time, and my strength had began to fail me, when the porter, who had returned, rang twice—the usual signal when my letters were left that required to be fetched from his hands. Fearing that if I did not attend the summons, the porter would himself come up, M. Ferrand said to me: 'Go; say but one word, and your father is lost; or even attempt to leave my house, and the consequences shall be the same; and as for you, if any one comes for your character, I will prevent your obtaining a situation, by giving them to understand, without altogether affirming it, that you have robbed me; and more than that, I will declare you to be an infamous girl, whom I could no longer retain.' The day after this scene, in spite of the threats of my master, I ran here to tell all to my father. He wished me instantly to quit the house; but the prison stared us in the face. The little I earned was indispensable to the family, since the illness of my mother, and the bad character M. Ferrand threatened to give me, would prevent me from getting a situation elsewhere for some time."

"Yes," said Morel, with bitterness, "I had the cowardice, the selfishness, to allow our child to return there. Oh, want, want, what dost thou sometimes entail upon us!"

"Alas, father, did not you try in every possible way to procure the thirteen hundred francs? but that being impossible, we were obliged to submit to our fate."

"Go on, go on; we have been your ruin, and are more guilty than yourself of the fearful misfortunes that have befallen you," said the lapidary, hiding his face in his hands.

"When I next saw my master," said Louise, "he resumed the harsh and severe manner with which he had usually treated me. He made not the slightest reference to the scene I have just related, while his housekeeper persisted in her accustomed annoying and unkind behaviour towards me, giving me scarcely sufficient food for my support, and even locking up the bread from me: she would carry her cruelty so far as to spoil and dirty the victuals left by herself and M. Ferrand for me, I always taking my meals after my master and the housekeeper, who invariably sat down to table together. My nights were as painful as my days. I durst not indulge in sleep, lest I should be surprised by the visits of the notary. I had no means of securing my chamber-door, and the chest of drawers with which I used to fasten myself in had been removed, leaving me only a small table, a chair, and my trunk. With these articles I barricaded the door as well as I was able, and always lay down in my clothes. Some time elapsed without my having any further alarm as regarded M. Ferrand, who seemed to have altogether forgotten me, and seldom even looked at me. By degrees my fears subsided, and I became almost persuaded I had nothing more to dread from the persecutions of my master. One Sunday I had permission to visit my home, and, delighted, I hastened to announce the happy change that had taken place, to my parents. Oh, how we all rejoiced to think so! Up to that moment, my dear father, I had concealed nothing from you. What I have still to tell you," murmured Louise, as her voice sunk into an inarticulate whisper, "is so dreadful, that I have never dared to reveal it."

"Oh, I was sure, too sure," cried Morel, with a wildness of manner and rapidity of utterance which astonished Rodolph, "that you were hiding something from me. Too plainly did I perceive, by your pale and altered countenance, that your mind was burthened with some heavy secret. Many a time have I said so to your poor mother; but she would not listen to me, and even blamed me for making myself unnecessarily miserable. So you see that, weak and selfish, to escape from trouble ourselves, we allowed our helpless child to remain with this monster. And to what have we reduced our poor girl?—why, to be classed with criminals in a prison! And then, too, after all—who knows? True, we are poor—very poor, and may be guilty—yes, yes, quite right, guilty of plunging our daughter into shame and disgrace. But, then, see how wretched and distressed we were! Besides, such as we ——" Then, as if suddenly striving to collect his bewildered ideas, Morel struck his forehead, exclaiming: "Alas! I know not what I say. My head feels as though it would burst, and my senses seem deserting me. I feel as though I were stupefied with drink. Alas, alas! I shall go mad!" and so saying, the unhappy man buried his face between his hands.

Unwilling that Louise should perceive the extent of his apprehensions, as regarded the agitated state of the lapidary, and how much alarm he felt at his wild, incoherent language, Rodolph gravely replied: "You are unjust, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her mother, her children, and you, that your poor wife dreaded the consequences of Louise's quitting the notary's house. Accuse no one; but let all your just anger, your bitter curses, fall on the head that alone deserves it—on that hypocritical monster who offered a weak and helpless girl the alternative of infamy or ruin—perhaps, death to those she most tenderly loved—on the fiend who could thus abuse his power as a master. But, patience; as I before remarked, Providence frequently reserves for evil-doers a fearful and astounding retribution." As Rodolph uttered these words, he spoke with a tone so expressive of his own conviction of the certain vengeance of Heaven, that Louise gazed at her preserver with a surprise not unmingled with fear. "Go on, my poor girl," he added, addressing Louise; "conceal nothing from us: it is more important than you can be aware, that you should relate all."

"I began somewhat to regain my tranquillity," said Louise, "when, one evening both M. Ferrand and his housekeeper went out. They did not dine at home. I was quite alone in the house. As usual, my allowance of bread, wine, and water, was left for me, and everything carefully locked up. When I had finished my work, I took the food placed for me, and, having made my meal, I retired to my bedroom, thinking it less dull than remaining down stairs by myself. I took care to light M. Ferrand's lamp, as, when he dined out, no one ever sat up for him. Once in my chamber, I seated myself, and commenced my sewing; but, contrary to my usual habit, I found the greatest difficulty in keeping myself awake, and, little by little, sleep overtook me. Alas, father!" cried Louise, interrupting herself, as though frightened at her own recital. "You will perhaps not credit what I am about to say, you will believe I am uttering falsehoods; and yet, here, by the lifeless body of my poor little sister, I swear that I am speaking the truth."

"Explain yourself," said Rodolph.

"Alas, sir, for seven months I have in vain tried to explain to myself that frightful night, without being able to do so; I have racked my brain to clear up that mystery."

"Merciful Heaven! what is she about to say?" exclaimed the lapidary, suddenly starting from the stupor into which he had occasionally fallen since the commencement of this recital.

"Contrary to my custom, I fell asleep in my chair," said Louise; "that is the last thing I can remember—before—before—— Oh! father, pardon me; I swear I am not guilty, indeed I am not."

"I believe you—I believe you; but speak!"

"I do not know how long I slept, but when I awoke, it was to shame, to shame and dishonour, for I found M. Ferrand, in bed beside me!"

"You lie! you lie!" shrieked the lapidary, in a tone of frenzied fury. "Confess you yielded to force, to a fear of seeing me dragged to prison, but do not thus impose upon me by falsehood!"

"Father, I swear that it is the truth I tell you."

"'Tis false! Why should the notary wish to imprison me, since you yielded to his wishes?"

"Yielded! Oh, no, father! My sleep was so profound, that I was as if dead. It appears to you extraordinary, impossible; I know it must, for even to this hour, I cannot comprehend it."

"I understand it all," said Rodolph, interrupting Louise; "the crime rests with this man. Do not accuse your daughter of falsehood, Morel. Tell me, Louise, while eating your dinner, before you went to your room, did you notice anything strange in the taste of what you drank? Try to recal this circumstance particularly."

After a moment's reflection, Louise answered: "I remember, truly, that the mixture of wine and water, which Madame Seraphin left me, according to custom, had rather a bitter taste; but I did not think it strange, because the housekeeper often amused herself by putting salt or pepper in my drink."

"And on that day, your drink had a bitter taste?"

"Yes, sir; but not sufficiently so to prevent my drinking it. I thought perhaps the wine was turned."

Morel, his eyes fixed, and his looks haggard, listened to the questions of Rodolph, and to the answers of Louise, without appearing to comprehend their meaning.

"Before you fell asleep on the chair, did you not feel your head heavy, your limbs powerless?"

"Oh, sir, my temples throbbed; I shivered, and was very uncomfortable."

"Oh, the wretch!—the villanous wretch!" cried Rodolph. "Do you know, Morel, what that man gave your child to drink?" The artisan looked at him, but did not speak in reply to the question. "The housekeeper, his accomplice, no doubt had mixed in Louise's drink a soporific, opium perhaps; the strength and senses of your child were thereby paralysed for several hours, and when she awoke from this lethargy she was dishonoured."

"Ah! now," cried Louise, "my misfortune is explained. You see, father, I am less culpable than I appeared. Father, my dear father, speak to me!"

The look of the lapidary was frightfully fixed. Such horrible depravity could never enter the mind of this single-hearted and honest man; he appeared scarcely to understand the fearful explanation. And then, for some time his reason had flown, his ideas were unsettled; then he fell into that uncertainty of thinking, which is to intelligence what night is to the sight—a formidable symptom of mental alienation. After a long pause, Morel said, in a voice hollow, brief, and hurried: "Oh, yes! it is bad—very bad—very, very bad!" and then he relapsed into his former apathy. Rodolph looked at him with anxiety; he feared that the energy inspired by indignation, began to be exhausted in this unfortunate man, in the same manner that violent grief will sometimes dry up the relief of tears. Wishing to terminate as soon as possible this sad interview, Rodolph said to Louise: "Courage, my child, and finish the unfolding of this tissue of horrors."

"Alas, sir, what you have already heard is nothing to that which is to follow. Seeing M. Ferrand beside me, I uttered a cry of horror. I would have fled, but he held me by force; I

still felt so weak, so heavy—caused, no doubt, by the drink of which you told me—that I could not escape from his hands. 'Why do you wish to go away now?' said M. Ferrand, with an air of astonishment, which confounded me. 'What is this new caprice! Am I not here by your consent?' 'Ah! sir, that is unworthy!' cried I. 'You have taken advantage of my slumber to ruin me, but father shall know all.' My master burst into a loud laugh. 'I abuse your slumber? I! You are jesting! Who do you think will believe this story? It is now four o'clock in the morning. I have been here since ten o'clock; you must have slept very long and soundly. Come, come, rather say that I have but agreed to your wishes. You must not be so capricious, or I shall be angry with you. Your father is in my power. You have no longer any cause for resisting me; submit, and we shall be good friends. If not, beware!' 'I will tell my father all!' I cried. 'He shall revenge me: there is law!' M. Ferrand looked at me with surprise. Will you be so foolish—so mad? What will you tell your father?—that I came here with your consent? Reflect upon it calmly: think how he will receive you.' 'Good heavens, that is not true!—you know that it is not true. You came here in spite of me.' 'In spite of you! Will you have the effrontery to utter such a lie? Do you wish a proof of your falsehood! I ordered my cashier, Germain, to return last evening, at ten o'clock, to finish some pressing work. He worked until one o'clock in the morning, in the room above this. Would he not have heard the cries, the noise of such a struggle as happened in the room below, vile creature! when you was not as reasonable as you have been to-day? Ask Germain, to-morrow, and he will admit that the house to-night has been perfectly quiet.'"

"Ah! every precaution was taken, that he might act with impunity," said Rodolph.

"Yes, sir; and I was terrified. To all that M. Ferrand said, I could find nothing to reply. Ignorant of the drink that he had caused me to take, I could not explain to myself why I had slept so long. Appearances were against me. If I complained, everybody would accuse me, particularly as the frightful night was to me an impenetrable mystery."

Rodolph remained silent and confounded at the frightful hypocrisy of Jacques Ferrand.

"Then you have never," said he to Louise, "dared to complain to your father of the odious profligacy of the notary?"

"No, sir; he would have, doubtless, believed me the willing victim of M. Ferrand. And, besides, I feared that in his anger he might forget that his own liberty, and the existence of the family, depended, in a great measure, upon my master."

"And probably," continued Rodolph, to save Louise as much as possible the agony of a further confession, "probably you have since found the force of imperious circumstances too strong for you to escape from his snare."

Louise cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Was he less brutal in his conduct afterwards towards you?"

"No, sir. In order to divert suspicion from his own infamous conduct, when he happened to have at dinner the curé of Bonne Nouvelle, or his vicar, my master would address me harshly in their presence, and urge the curé to admonish me; for he said he was sure that sooner or later I should be ruined, for that my manners with the clerks in his office were excessively free; that I was very indolent; and that he was only induced to retain me in his service out of charity to my father, an honest man, at the head of a family, whom he was desirous of obliging. All but this last remark was false. I seldom saw the clerks of the office; they were employed in a part of the building unconnected with that in which I was."

"When you were alone with M. Ferrand, how did he explain his conduct towards you, in the presence of the curé?"

"He would assure me that he was only joking. But the curé thought that his observations were serious, for he told me that depravity was doubly censurable when committed in such a religious family, with such a devout example continually before my eyes. To these remarks, I knew not what to say. I blushed, and hung my head; my silence and confusion were regarded as proof of guilt. Life was so great a burden to me, that I was often at the point of destroying myself; and I was only induced to tolerate existence, by thinking of my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, who were, in some measure, dependent on me. And I found this consolation in my shame, that my father was at least saved from prison. A new misfortune now fell upon me. I was conscious that I should soon become a mother, and I gave myself up as totally lost. I know not why it was, but I had this presentiment, that when M. Ferrand should discover that I was in a situation which should have secured to me the greatest kindness, that he would really redouble his cruelty and persecutions; yet, I was very far from suspecting what would really happen."

Morel, having recovered from his temporary aberration, gazed around, with a look of astonishment, passed his hand over his brow, and collecting his scattered thoughts, said to his daughter: "It seems to me that I have wandered—that I have lost myself for a few moments, from fatigue or sorrow. What were you saying, my daughter?"

"When M. Ferrand learned my situation——"

The lapidary interrupted her with a gesture of despair.

Rodolph attempted to soothe him.

"Yes, yes; I will listen. Come, tell us the conclusion. Go on, go on," said Morel.

"I consulted M. Ferrand as to the means I should employ to conceal my shame, and the fatal consequences of the crime of which he was guilty. Alas! alas! you will scarcely credit me, my father."

"Well; what happened?"

"Interrupting with anger and affected surprise, he pretended not to understand what I had said. He asked me if I was deranged? Overwhelmed with affright, I exclaimed: 'Oh, God! what will become of me? Now, if you have no pity for me, show it at least to your child!' 'What a horrible fiction!' exclaimed M. Ferrand, raising his hands. 'Miserable wretch! have you the audacity to accuse me of stooping to a person of your class? Are you so impudent—to accuse me of being the cause of your infamous condition? I, who have so often warned you, before the most unimpeachable witnesses, that you would ruin yourself? Leave my house, instantly. I dismiss you forthwith, from my service.'"

Both Rodolph and Morel were overwhelmed

with horror; completely thunderstruck by an hypocrisy so infernal.

"I confess," said Rodolph, "that this recital is beyond my wildest conceptions of the horrible!"

Morel uttered not a word. His eyes stared from their sockets, in a frightful manner; convulsive spasms contracted his features; he left the bench upon which he sat, and suddenly twitching open a drawer, drew from it a long, sharp file, with a handle of wood, and rushed towards the door, with the weapon in his hands.

Rodolph, suspecting his intention, arrested, by the arm, the abused and wretched father.

"Unhand me!" said the artisan, struggling. "I shall commit more murders than one;" and, bewildered with grief, he threatened Rodolph.

"Beware! beware! My father, will you strike our protector, our saviour?"

"Bah, bah, bah! He cares mightily for us. 'Tis the notary he wishes to save," said the deranged artisan.

After a moment's struggle, Rodolph, with gentle violence, forced the weapon from the lapidary's hand, and threw it out on the stairs.

Louise hastened to the lapidary, embraced him in her arms, and exclaimed: "My father! my father! you have raised your hand against our benefactor. Recover yourself—collect your bewildered senses, I pray!"

These words seemed to recall the lapidary to himself; he covered his face with his hands, and silently fell at the feet of Rodolph.

"Rise, rise, most unhappy and wretched father!" said Rodolph, in great kindness; "have patience to endure but a little longer; I can conceive of your anger, your hatred, your despair; but it is our righteous vengeance, which I beg of you not to destroy."

"My God! my God!" exclaimed the outraged father; "what can justice, what can law do against the wretch! We are poor, and when we appeal to the law against a man who is rich, powerful, respectable, they will laugh in our faces;" and a convulsive ha! ha! ha! a wild, maniacal laugh broke from the tortured lapidary. "Where is our proof? yes, yes—what they call proof! Shall we be believed, credited?—no no," he exclaimed in still wilder fury; "I have no confidence but in the impartiality of the knife."

"Silence, silence, Morel! grief infuriates you," said Rodolph, with a mournful and authoritative tone. "Let your daughter continue to speak, for the moments are precious; the magistrate is waiting for her. I must know everything; I repeat, everything: proceed, my child."

Morel, in agony of grief, fell back upon his stool.

"It will be idle," continued Louise, "to speak of my grief, my tears, my entreaties; I was struck down by the notary's reply; I was completely annihilated. The incident which I last narrated, took place at ten o'clock in the morning, in the office of M. Ferrand. The curé was expected at breakfast on that day, and he entered about the time my master was loading me with reproaches and insults: he appeared to be rather startled by the appearance of the priest."

"And what did he say?"

"His purpose was soon formed; for, pointing to me, he said: 'Well, abbé, I was right in saying that this miserable girl would be ruined! she is ruined—lost for ever! She has just confessed to me her crime and shame; she has even implored me to save her—the miserable female, whom, out of pity, I received under my roof!' 'Is it possible,' said the abbé, 'in spite of the salutary advice which your master has so frequently given you in my presence, that you have degraded yourself to such an infamous degree? Your crime is unpardonable.' And turning to the notary: 'My friend, after the kindness you have shown this miserable creature, out of compassion to her relatives, any further clemency would be a criminal weakness,' said the abbé, a dupe, like every one else, to the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand."

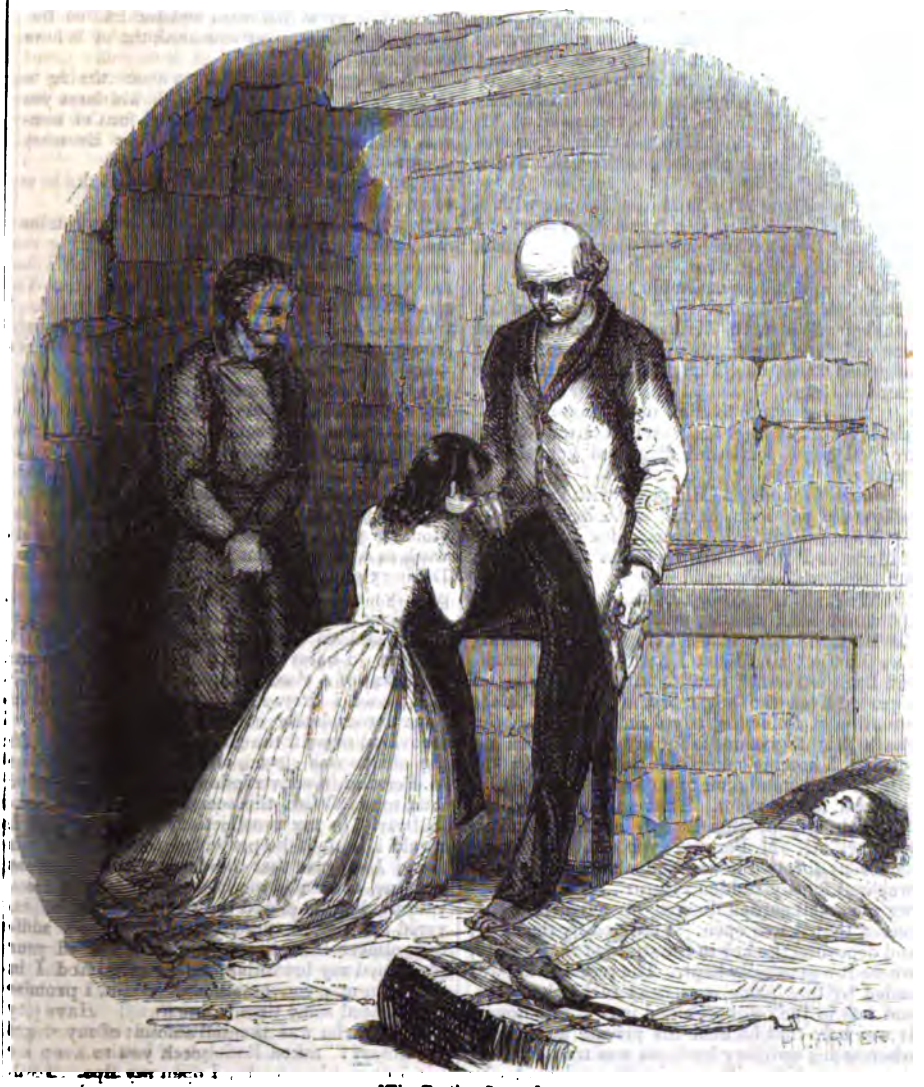
"And why did you not instantly unmask the infamous wretch?" said Rodolph.

"I was terrified, sir; my head was giddy; I dared not open my lips; I could not utter a word. But I wished to speak to defend myself: 'But, sir,' exclaimed I —— 'Not one word more,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me; 'you heard the abbé say, that clemency would be weakness. Within an hour you must leave my house;' and without affording me an opportunity to reply, he withdrew with the abbé into an adjoining apartment. After M. Ferrand had left the room, I was for a moment lost as in delirium. I saw myself expelled from his house, deprived of the hope of a situation elsewhere, on account of the condition I was unfortunately in, and the bad account which my master would give of my character. I feared that in his wrath he would send my father to prison. I knew not what would become of me—where to go. I went to take refuge and weep in my own room. Within two hours, M. Ferrand appeared. 'Have you packed up your clothes?' said he to me. 'Have mercy! oh, have mercy!' I cried, falling upon my knees; 'do not, I pray you, turn me from your house in such a wretched situation. What will become of me? where shall I go? No one will receive me into their house.' 'So much the better,' said the notary: 'God thus punishes your wickedness and your lies.' 'Do you dare to say that I lie?' I exclaimed with indignation: 'do you dare to deny that you yourself are the sole cause of my ruin?' 'Leave my house, infamous creature! since you persist in your calumnies,' he exclaimed in a terrible voice; 'and as an additional punishment, to-morrow I will send your father to prison.' 'No, no!' exclaimed I in affright; 'I will no longer accuse you, I promise it to you; but do not turn me away. Have pity upon my father. The small amount of my wages supports the family. I beseech you to keep me in your house. I will not open my lips. I will endeavour to conceal my situation; and when I can be no longer disguised, you may turn me away.' After renewed entreaties, M. Ferrand consented to retain me, and I regarded it as a great favour, such a frightful fate was there before me! And yet, during the five months which succeeded this torturing interview, I was wretched beyond description, and treated with inhuman cruelty. M. Germain, whom I seldom saw, sometimes questioned me as to the cause of my sorrow; but shame closed my lips."

"Was it not about that period, that he took lodgings in this house?"

"Yes, sir. He was anxious for a room in the Rue du Temple, or the Arsenal; and as there was one vacant here, I mentioned to him the room which you now occupy; and as it suited him, he hired it. When he left, about two months since, he begged of me not to mention the place of his new residence, which was known at M. Ferrand's."

GERMAIN.



[The Parting Scene.]

The necessity imposed upon Germain of escaping from those in pursuit of him, explained this precaution to Rodolph.

"And did you never think of making a confidant of M. Germain?" asked Rodolph of Louise.

"No, sir; he was also a dupe to the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand. He confessed that he was severe and exacting, but he believed him the most honest man in the world."

"Did not M. Germain, when he lodged in this house, hear your father accuse M. Ferrand of attempting to ruin you?"

"My father never spoke of his fears in the presence of strangers; and besides, at that time, I quieted all his anxieties. I comforted him by saying, that M. Ferrand no longer directed a thought towards me. Alas! my poor father! you must pardon those falsehoods. My sole object in telling them, was to alleviate your distress. You see that it was so, do you not?"

Morel spoke not a word. His head was inclined upon his arms, which were crossed upon the table, and he was sobbing most violently.

Rodolph intimated to Louise not to address her father again, and she thus continued her afflicting narrative: "I passed those five months in tears and uninterrupted anguish. By great caution, I had succeeded in concealing my situation from every one; but I could not hope to disguise it for the last term of the fatal period. The future daily appeared more and more frightful to me. M. Ferrand had declared that he would no longer retain me in his house. I was about, therefore, to lose this final resort for the sustenance of our family; I should be cursed, and driven from his presence by my father, who, after the deceit I had used to tranquillize his mind, would believe me the willing victim of M. Ferrand's guilt. What would become of me? Whither could I fly? Where should I betake

myself in my present condition? I entertained at this time a most criminal project, from which I shrank before the period arrived to put it in execution. I make the confession to you, because I am anxious to conceal nothing, even what may be regarded as evidence against me; and also for the purpose of showing you to what extremities I was driven by the inhuman treatment of M. Ferrand. Had I yielded to the thought, would he not have been an accessory to the crime which I meditated?"

After a silence of a moment, Louise, with a great effort, continued in a trembling voice: "I had heard from the porter that there was a quack living in this house, who ——"

The poor victim was unable to proceed.

Rodolph recollected, that at the time of his first interview with Madame Pipelet, he had received from the postman a letter written in a disguised hand, on which he had discerned the traces of tears.

"And you wrote to him, unfortunate child!" said he, "three days ago; on that letter you had dropped some tears and disguised your handwriting."

Louise looked at Rodolph with surprise: "How did you learn that?" she asked.

"Be not disturbed. I was alone in the lodge of Madame Pipelet when the letter was brought, and accidentally observed it."

"Well, sir, it was so. In that letter, to which I did not affix any signature, I requested the charlatan to station himself on that same evening near the Chateau d'Eau; I hardly had my senses, and I wished to ask him his infamous advice. I departed from the house of the notary with the intention of following any directions which the quack might give me; but my reason soon returning, I became conscious that I was on the road to the commission of an awful crime, and I returned to my room. That very evening, the final calamity of this history of horrors overwhelmed me. M. Ferrand supposed that I would be absent for two hours, and was of course unprepared for my sudden return. As I was passing the small garden door, to my surprise, I perceived that it was open. I entered by that way, and deposited the key in the study of M. Ferrand, where it was usually kept. The room which was called by that name, was next to his bedroom, and was in the most secluded part of the house. It was here that he held his private audiences; whereas his ordinary business was transacted in the office. You will perceive in a moment why I inform you of all these details. As I was perfectly well acquainted with all parts of the house, after passing through the dining-room, in which there was a lamp, I entered without any light into the parlour, and thence passed into the study, which was next to the bedroom. The door of this last apartment flew suddenly open, at the time I was placing the key upon the table. My master had scarcely perceived me, by the light of the lamp which was burning in his own room, before he quickly closed the door upon some person I did not perceive; and notwithstanding the darkness, rushed upon me with violence, and seizing me by the neck, as if his intention was to strangle me, said to me in a voice which, although low, was furious and agitated: 'You have been eavesdropping, have you? you listened at the door, did you? Pray what have you heard? Answer me—answer me, or I will choke you!' But suddenly, as if altering his intention, without giving me time for one word of reply, he thrust me backward into the dining-room; and the door of the anteroom being open, he threw me in with great violence, and locked the door."

"And did you overhear nothing of his conversation?"

"Nothing, sir. Had I been aware that he was in his room with any one, I should have been careful not to approach the study, for this liberty was expressly forbidden to all the household, even to Madame Seraphin."

"After you left the anteroom, what did he say to you?"

"It was the housekeeper who came to release me; and I did not see M. Ferrand during that evening. The alarm and cruelty which I had experienced, seriously affected my health. The next day as I came down, I met M. Ferrand. I trembled at the thought of his previous threats. But what was my surprise to hear him say, in a voice comparatively calm: 'You know that I have forbidden you to enter my study, whenever any one was in my private room. But it will be useless to waste any more words to regulate your conduct during the short period that you are to remain under this roof;' and having spoke these words, he entered his office. This moderation following so close upon the violence of the previous evening, astonished me. I continued my work as usual; I went to arrange his bedroom. During the night, as I have said, I had suffered greatly; and as I was hanging up some clothes, in a dark closet near the alcove, I was seized with a sudden vertigo, and felt that I was about to faint. I naturally sustained myself in falling, by means of a cloak, hanging against the partition; and I drew it down with me, and was almost completely covered thereby. When I recovered myself, the glass door of this closet in the alcove was closed, and I heard the voice of M. Ferrand in conversation. He spoke in a very loud tone. With the scene of the night before still vivid in my recollection, I feared that he would kill me if he perceived the slightest motion. I suppose that the cloak which had fallen over me, concealed me from my master's observation when he closed the door. Had he discovered me, I never should have made him credit this almost inexplicable accident. I therefore restrained my breathing, and overheard the termination of a conversation which had probably commenced some time before."

"And who was the individual closeted with the notary?" asked Rodolph of Louise.

"I do not know, sir; I did not recognise the voice."

"And what did they say?"

"The conversation had been continued for some time, when I recovered my consciousness. This is what I heard said: 'Nothing can be more simple,' said a voice that was unknown; 'a rogue called Bras-Rouge, a desperate smuggler, for the purposes of the affair to which I have alluded, has put me in communication with a family of fresh-water pirates,* established at the termination of a small island in the neighbourhood of Asnières. They are the most desperate bandits in the world; the father and grandfather have both been beheaded; two of the sons have been sentenced to the gallies for life; but there still remain the mother, three sons and two daughters, who have inherited all the qualities of their deceased kindred. It is said that, for the purposes of robbery and plunder, they often land

* The reader will, in course of time, be made acquainted with the singular life of these Parisian pirates.

during the night on both sides of the Seine, as high up as Bercy. They are beings of a character who would murder any one for a crown. But we have no need of such services: it is sufficient if they are willing to afford hospitality to your lady of the province. The Martials—such is the patronymic of the pirates—will be regarded by her as a family of honest fishermen. I will, according to your orders, pay one or two visits to this young lady, and will prescribe for her certain potions, and in the course of a week she will become acquainted with the graveyard at Asnières. In the villages, deaths frequently occur without exciting any particular investigation, whereas at Paris a sudden decease excites a thorough examination. But when will you send the young provincial to the island of Asnières, for it is necessary to inform the Martials of the part they are expected to play.' 'To-morrow she will arrive here; by the day after she will be with them,' replied M. Ferrand; 'and I will inform her that, at my request, Doctor Vincent will offer his professional advice.' 'Agreed: I will assume that name—it is as good as any other.'"

"What new mystery of crime and infamy are they designing?" asked Rodolph, whose surprise increased as the narrative proceeded.

"It was not a new crime: you will see that their conversation had reference to one with which you are already acquainted," said Louise. "I heard a movement of the chairs, and inferred therefrom that the conversation was concluded. 'I do not ask you to maintain an inviolable secrecy,' said M. Ferrand; 'you have the same power over me that I have over you.' The other voice replied: 'We are enabled to render mutual service, and are prevented from exerting our arts to the detriment of each other. To convince you of my zeal, I will inform you, that I only received your letter at ten o'clock last evening, and here I am, early in the morning, prepared to execute your wishes. Farewell, confederate. Do not forget the Isle of Asnières, the fisherman Martial, and Doctor Vincent. Your provincial lady will be under obligation to those three magical names, for a speedy termination of her career.' 'Wait,' said M. Ferrand; 'let me go and pull the bolt, which, out of precaution, I have placed on the door of my study; and let me see also if there is any one in the antechamber, that you may not be prevented from returning through the alley of the garden, the way you came in.' M. Ferrand now retired for a few moments, but he speedily returned, and I heard him departing with the man with whom he had been conversing. 'You can imagine my terror, sir, during this conversation, and my surprise at being the forced *confidante* of such a secret. Two hours afterwards, Madame Seraphin came to my room, whither I had gone in great agitation, and seriously unwell. 'M. Ferrand wishes to see you,' said she; 'you have much better fortune than you deserve. Come down quickly. You are very pale now, but what he is about to tell you will bring some colour to your cheeks.' I followed Madame Seraphin. M. Ferrand was in the study, and I shuddered involuntarily at the sight of that man; and yet he looked milder than usual. He fixed his eye upon me, as if he would penetrate my thoughts, and my own dropped almost instinctively. 'You look quite ill,' said he. 'Yes, sir,' I replied, astonished at the kindness of his tone. 'It is very easily explained,' said he; 'your sickness results from your situation, and the efforts you have made to conceal it; but, in spite of your lies, your infamous conduct, and your indiscretion last evening, my heart is touched with some compassion for you,' said he, in a gentle tone. 'It will be impossible for you to maintain this disguise for more than a few days longer. Although I was compelled to treat you as you deserved in the presence of the curate of the parish, still, as the event to which I allude would be a disgrace to a house as sanctified as mine, and would bring despair and distress into your own family, I have concluded, in order to avert these calamities, to afford my assistance.' 'Oh, sir!' I exclaimed, 'such words of kindness from your lips compel me to forget the past.' 'Forget what?' he said, harshly. 'Nothing, nothing. Pardon me,' I replied, through fear of irritating his present kind temper towards me. 'Listen to me then,' he added: 'to-morrow you must inform your father, that it is my intention to send you into the country for two or three months; that I have a house which I have just purchased there, which I wish you to arrange; and that, during your absence, I will send to him the wages which will be due to you. I will give you letters to Madame Martial, the mother of an honest family of fishermen, who reside near Asnières. You will be careful to say that you came from the provinces, without entering into further particulars. You will learn, on some other occasion, the reason of this precaution which I suggest. The mother of the family will display towards you all the kindness and attention which she would show to a daughter. A medical friend of my own, Doctor Vincent, will afford you the professional advice and attendance which your situation demands; and you will soon have abundant evidence of my charitable intentions towards you.'"

"What an infamous plot!" exclaimed Rodolph. "The mysterious conversation is now as clear to me as noonday. Fearing that upon the previous evening you might have surprised a secret of terrible import, he wished to silence your tongue for ever; and he probably intended to mislead his accomplice, by pretending that you were a lady from the provinces. How startled you must have been at this murderous design!"

"It produced an awful impression upon me. I was so wild with surprise and fear, that I could not open my lips. I looked at M. Ferrand with terror: my senses were bewildered. I was upon the point of putting my life into additional jeopardy, by informing him that I had overheard in the morning his infamous plan; but the new danger to which such a confession would have exposed me occurring to my mind, I placed restraint upon myself. 'Do you not understand me?' he finally exclaimed, with great impatience. 'Yes, sir, I do,' said I, trembling with agitation; 'but I prefer not to go into the country.' 'Why not? You will be kindly treated at the place which I propose.' 'No, no; I will not go: I choose to remain in Paris, and not be separated from my family.' 'Do you positively refuse?' said M. Ferrand, smothering his rage, and looking at me with fixed attention. 'Why have you so suddenly changed your mind? You accepted the place a short time since.' I was aware that his suspicions were awakened; and that if he should succeed in penetrating my thoughts, that I was lost for ever. I replied, that I did not then know that it would be necessary to leave Paris, and be separated from my family. 'But you have dishonoured your family, miserable girl!'

said he; and, losing all self-command, he seized me by the arm, and pushed me with such violence as to prostrate me upon the floor. 'I will leave you until to-morrow,' said he; 'but then you must leave this house for the protection of the Martials, or go and inform your father that I have discharged you, and that he will be immediately sent to prison.' I remained there stretched upon the floor, for I had not strength to rise. Madame Seraphin appeared when she heard her master's voice raised in an angry tone, and with her assistance, I succeeded, step by step, in reaching my room. I threw myself upon my bed; I remained upon it till night. These repeated shocks and aggravated violence produced such a terrible effect upon me, that I was seized with the pains of premature labour."

"Why did you not cry for aid?"

"I dared not do it. M. Ferrand was anxious to get rid of me; and he would certainly have employed that infamous Doctor Vincent to have murdered me at my master's house, instead of poisoning me at the Martials'. I feared also that M. Ferrand might strangle me, and allege that I died in childbed. Perhaps, sir, such fears were foolish, but I could not withstand them; if I could have resisted them, I should have braved exposure, and escaped the awful accusation which has been brought against me. No, no! So far from imploring aid, I smothered even the cries of agony, by grasping with my teeth the covering of the bed. After anguish which defies all language to describe, unattended—alone in the silence and utter darkness of the night—I gave birth to a child, whose trembling spark of life was extinguished by such a frightful advent. I did not kill it! As true as there is a God in heaven, I did not murder my child! No! oh, no! The tortures of that almost endless night were relieved by one throb of bitter joy, as I clasped my offspring in these arms." And the voice of the wretched girl was stifled by her sobs.

Morel had listened to this dreadful tale, with an indifference and an apathy which terrified Rodolph. But seeing his daughter melted into tears, the lapidary, whose head was still reclining upon the table, with his hands pressed against his temples, fastened upon Louise a glaring eye, and said: "She weeps—she weeps!" and, after a moment of vacant hesitation, added: "Why—why does my daughter weep? Ah! yes, yes; I remember—the notary—I know! Proceed, my poor Louise; you are my child—I love you still. A moment since, my eyes were so darkened by tears, that I did not know you. Great heaven! what an awful pang shoots through my brain!"

"You see—you see that I am not guilty, my father!"

"Yes, yes! I see—I see it."

"It is a sad misfortune—but I was so terrified by the notary."

"Yes, yes—the notary! he is a wicked man. I believe him very wicked."

"But you will forgive me, father?"

"Yes."

"Without reserve?"

"Without reserve. Oh! I shall always love you—although—you see—because—I cannot say —— Oh! my head! my head!"

Louise turned towards Rodolph with a glance of alarm.

"Your father suffers greatly; but do not speak to him, and he will become calm. Proceed with your story."

Louise cast several anxious glances at Morel, and thus continued: "I pressed the new-born infant to my bosom. I was surprised not to hear it breathe; but consoled myself with the thought that the breathing of so small a creature was too gentle to be heard. Its unnatural coldness next alarmed me. I would have given worlds for a light, but I never was allowed one. I longed for the appearance of day, and tried to impart warmth to its motionless form, but it seemed to grow colder and colder. I said to myself, that it must be the intense cold which has benumbed it thus. When daylight appeared, I drew near the window with my infant. I gazed upon it—'twas cold and icy. Upon its little heart I placed my hand—'twas motionless. The child was dead."——Louise, drowned in tears, continued: "How can I describe the agonizing thoughts of that terrible moment? the sequel only lingers in my memory, like a vague and confused dream. Mingled emotions of fear, despair, rage, took possession of my mind. A new terror banished all other alarms. I feared that, if the infant was found dead by my side, I should be accused of its murder. To conceal the remains of the lifeless being from every eye, was now the sole object of my thoughts. I should then escape the dreadful anger of my father—the fearful vengeance of the notary—since I should be released from his slavery, and find, in employment elsewhere, a support for my family. These were the reasons which forced me to conceal the birth and lifeless body of my child. It was wrong, undoubtedly; but with all the calamities that threatened me, delirious with agony of body and anguish of mind, I could not anticipate the horrible suspicions to which I was exposing myself."

"What torture? what torture!" exclaimed Rodolph, unable to suppress his feelings.

"The light of day was rapidly increasing," continued Louise; "within a few moments, those who now slept would be awake. I could hesitate no longer. I enveloped the lifeless remains in such a shroud as I could provide in this terrible exigency, and descended softly and quietly the stairs. I had intended to dig at the bottom of the garden, its grave; but the ground was frozen so hard by the severe frost of the previous night, as to prevent me. I concealed the body in a sort of cellar which was used as a kind of conservatory, and which was very seldom entered during the winter. I covered the body of my poor child with an empty flower-box, and stole back to my room unobserved. But a confused remembrance of the whole scene lingers in my mind. In my weak and suffering condition, I cannot now comprehend how I had the strength and the courage to perform these frightful obsequies. At nine o'clock, Madame Seraphin came to my room, to learn why I had not got up. I informed her that I was so unwell, that I begged she would allow me to remain in bed during the rest of the day; since, by M. Ferrand's orders, I was to leave the house to-morrow. Within a short time the notary himself appeared. 'I observe you are more unwell,' said he; 'tis the result of your obstinacy: if you had only profited by my kind intentions, you might now have been settled with honest people, who would show you every attention. But I will not be so uncharitable as to leave you in such a dangerous situation without medical advice: this evening, Dr. Vincent will attend you.' I trembled with fear at this threat, and I

replied to M. Ferrand, that I had become aware that I was wrong in refusing his kindness yesterday, but that I would now accept it, and thought that I should be sufficiently recovered to go to the Martials, by the day after to-morrow, and that it would be useless to send for Dr. Vincent this evening. I was only desirous of gaining time. I had determined to leave the house and return to my father, with the hope that all which had passed would be concealed. Reassured by my promise, M. Ferrand, for the first time in his life, was almost affectionate towards me, and commended me to the care of Madame Seraphin. I passed the day in a state of incessant agitation, lest some accident should bring to light the corpse of my child. My only hope was that the weather might become milder, that I might be able to bury my infant in the earth. I was somewhat encouraged by a slight fall of snow. During the entire day I remained in bed. Night having arrived, I waited until the whole household had retired. I rallied sufficient strength to rise from my bed and bring an axe from the wood-pile, in order to dig a grave in the ground, which was covered with snow. After great difficulty, I succeeded in accomplishing my object. I took the infant in my arms—I bedewed it with tears. As I was ignorant of the service for the dead, I repeated over it a *pater* and an *ave*: I besought my God to receive the poor child into his blissful paradise. I enclosed it in the flower-box; but I thought my courage would fail me when I covered the coffin with the cold earth! A mother burying her own child! At length I accomplished this heart-rending task. How hard it was for me to perform! I covered the earth with snow, so that no traces might be discovered. The light of the moon assisted my melancholy labours, and I could scarcely tear myself from the grave. Poor infant! under the frozen earth, covered with the snow, I could hardly believe that, although dead, it was insensible to the cold. I finally returned to my room, and retired to my bed in a violent fever. In the morning, M. Ferrand sent to enquire respecting my health. I replied that I was better, and that I should certainly be able to start for the country to-morrow. I continued in bed during the remainder of the day, in order to recover my strength. At night I arose, and descended into the kitchen, in order to warm myself by the fire. I remained there very late, entirely alone, and then went into the garden to repeat a final prayer. As I was returning to my room, I met M. Germain upon the landing of the apartment in which he was sometimes employed. He appeared pale and agitated. Placing a rouleau of gold in my hand, he said to me in a hurried voice: 'Your father will be arrested early to-morrow morning, on a bill of exchange for thirteen hundred francs: he is unable to pay it—here is the money. Hasten to his house before the dawn of day. I have not discovered until to-day, the character of M. Ferrand; he is a very wicked man: it is my purpose to unmask him. Do not inform any one that you received this money from me;' and M. Germain ran down stairs without giving me an opportunity to express my thanks."

"This morning," continued Louise, "before any of the household of M. Ferrand had arisen, I came here with the money which M. Germain had given me, to relieve my father. But the amount was not large enough; and had it not been for your generosity, I could not have delivered him from the hands of the officers. It is probable that after my departure, some one visited my room, and discovered the evidence which has led to this fatal accusation. As a last favour, sir," said Louise, drawing from her pocket the gold, "I beg of you to return this money to M. Germain. I had promised to inform no one that he was employed at M. Ferrand's, but as you are already aware of it, I cannot accuse myself of indiscretion. I now solemnly repeat to you, in the sight of that God who hears me, that I have not uttered a word but what is strictly true. I have not attempted to palliate my errors, and ——"

But interrupting herself, Louise said, in a frightened tone: "Look at my father, sir! What can be the matter with him?"

Morel had listened to the last part of the narrative with a gloomy indifference, which Rodolph had attributed to the overwhelming grief of the deeply injured father. "After such repeated and violent shocks," thought Rodolph, "the fountain of tears must have been so exhausted, his sensibility so blunted, that his apathy is easily explained. He has not even strength enough left," soliloquized Rodolph, "to express the burning indignation which he must feel." He was mistaken. As the flame of an expiring candle flutters in the socket, now almost dying into darkness, and again reviving until it is finally extinguished, in the same manner the already shaken intellect of Morel vacillated with a fitful glimmer, sending forth some feeble rays of intelligence, until it suddenly sank into the darkness of idiotcy. The conclusion of this terrible narrative had made no impression on the beclouded mind of the lapidary. The wheel which he employed in his daily labour, was placed out of the reach of the artisan. He held neither jewels nor any utensils in his hands; but, by his movements and gestures, he seemed to be employed in his ordinary avocation with imaginary tools, and accompanied this pantomime of delirium with a noise of the tongue to indicate the sound of the wheel in its revolutions.

"I beg of you, sir," said Louise, with increased alarm, "to look at my father!" and approaching the lapidary, she said to him, in a most affectionate and supplicating tone: "Father! father!"

Morel cast upon his daughter the staring, vague, unrecognising glance peculiar to the deranged; and without relaxing his imaginary employment, he said, in a voice which was gentle and subdued: "I owe thirteen hundred francs to a notary: it is the price of Louise's blood. I must work, toil, sweat, but I will pay it; oh, yes! I will pay it—pay it."

"Good heaven, sir!" exclaimed Louise, "my father has entirely lost his reason! But it cannot last long—it will revive—it will be restored—it is only a momentary absence."

"Morel, my friend, do you not see us? Your daughter is here: she is guiltless of any crime."

"Thirteen hundred francs!" repeated the lapidary, as he continued his pantomime, without casting a look upon Rodolph.

"My father!" said Louise, throwing herself upon her knees before him, and, in spite of his resistance, taking his hands in her own: "it is I, your child, your Louise!"

"Thirteen hundred francs!" responded the lapidary, releasing himself from his daughter's hands,; "thirteen hundred! or else," he added,

in a low and confidential tone, "Louise is beheaded;" and he intently continued his fancied work.

A terrible cry broke from Louise: "My father is deranged!" she exclaimed, "is deranged! and it is I—yes I—who am the cause! but God knows that the guilt rests solely with that monster!"

"Be calm, my poor child, and let your courage revive: this derangement of the intellect will be but momentary. Your father has been exposed to so many reiterated blows of late, that his reason has trembled beneath them; but let us hope that it will soon return."

"But my mother, my grandmother, my sisters, my brothers—what will become of them?" exclaimed Louise; "they are now deprived of their only means of support—my father and myself. They must perish from cold and starvation, misery and despair."

"Am I not here? Be calm, my child; they shall need nothing. Take courage: the disclosure which you have made, will be the means of inflicting deserved punishment upon a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence, and I doubt not it will be universally sustained and vindicated."

"Ah, sir, that man has been the cause of infamy, disgrace, death; and he has accomplished it all with impunity. Nothing can be done against him—nothing; and that thought consummates my misery."

"Let the thought, that he will meet with deserved vengeance, sustain you."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean, that you should cherish the thought that yourself, your father, and friends will all be avenged."

"Avenged!"

"Yes. I swear to you," said Rodolph solemnly, "that when his guilt has once been proved, that man shall most severely expiate the infamy, disgrace, and death, of which he has been the cause. If there is not power in the laws to reach him—if his cunning and skill are equal to his turpitude—his cunning will be met by cunning as great, his skill with craft superior to his own, and his crimes by those as deep, but which will be to his own, what a just and retributive punishment inflicted by an inexorable hand is to base and cowardly murder."

"May God hear you, sir! It is not myself that I wish to avenge; it is my insane father—it is my child, who perished at the birth." Then, making a final effort to recall Morel from his delirium, Louise exclaimed: "Farewell, my father! they are dragging me to prison—I shall see you no more. It is your Louise who bids you farewell. My father! my father! my father!"

To this distressing appeal the lapidary made no response; no echo answered from his poor, annihilated soul:—the paternal chord, the last to be snapped, had now ceased to vibrate.

The door of the garret opened, and the officer entered.

"The time has expired," said he, addressing Rodolph, "and I am obliged with regret to announce to you, that it is impossible for me to allow this conversation to continue any longer."

"The conversation is already ended," replied Rodolph, with indignant grief, pointing to the lapidary. "Louise has nothing more to tell; the father has nothing more to hear—he is insane!"

"Alas! it is what I feared—it is awful!" exclaimed the magistrate; and approaching near the artisan, he was convinced, after a moment's examination, of the sad reality. "Ah, sir," continued he, in a sympathizing tone, to Rodolph, "I was already anxious that the innocence of this young woman should be established; but after such a calamity, my sympathy with her will not exhaust itself in wishes. No, no: I will inform the judges of this most frightful blow, and I doubt not that it will act as an additional motive to sustain, if possible, her innocence."

"Well, well, sir; in acting thus, you will not only fulfil the functions of your office, but a sacred duty attached to it."

"Believe me, sir, that our mission is almost invariably so painful a one, that it affords us happiness, and inspires us with gratitude, when the honest and good occasionally enlist our sympathies."

"One word more, sir: the disclosure of Louise Morel has satisfied me of her innocence. Can you inform me in what way the crime of which she is accused was discovered, or rather denounced?"

"This morning, sir, a housekeeper, in the service of M. Ferrand, a notary, deposed to me, that after the sudden disappearance of Louise Morel, whom she knew to have been for seven months *enciente*, she had examined the room of the girl, and had discovered indications of a clandestine delivery; a further investigation of marks in the snow, led to the discovery of a recently born infant interred in the garden. After the deposition of the housekeeper, I visited Rue Sentier, and found M. Jacques Ferrand very indignant that such a scandalous affair had transpired in his house. The curate of the church of Bonne Nouvelle, who had been sent for by M. Ferrand, declared that the girl Morel had confessed her fault in his own presence, on a certain day, when she was imploring the compassion and forgiveness of her master; and that, moreover, he had frequently heard M. Ferrand give Louise the severest admonitions, predicting that sooner or later she would ruin herself; a prediction, said the abbé, which has been unhappily realized. The indignation of the notary appeared to me," continued the officer, "so justifiable, that I participated in some degree in his anger; he told me that Louise Morel had probably taken refuge at her father's, and the crime of which she was accused being of an aggravated character, I proceeded immediately to arrest her."

Rodolph restrained his rage at the duplicity of the notary, and said to the officer: "I give you a thousand thanks for the forbearance you have displayed in this arrest, and for the sympathy which you have promised Louise. I will have a situation provided for this unfortunate man, and also for the mother of his wife, in some hospital for the insane." Then, addressing Louise, who continued kneeling at her father's feet, and attempting in vain to recall him to his reason, he said: "Submit to your fate, my child; depart without embracing your mother, spare her so distressing a farewell. Give yourself no uneasiness about their support, nothing henceforth shall be wanting for their comfort; a nurse shall be provided for your mother, and your brothers and sisters shall be placed under the charge of our good neighbour, Mademoiselle Rigolette. No pains shall be spared, to restore your father speedily to the use of his senses. Be sustained

by courage and confidence, my child; the virtuous are frequently tried by misfortunes; but they always emerge from such struggles, purer, stronger, and more respected."

Two hours after the arrest of Louise, the lapidary and the idiot were, by the orders of Rodolph, accompanied to Bicêtre by David, the negro physician; and such arrangements were made as to entitle them to private apartments, and the most scrupulous attention. Morel made no resistance in leaving the house in Rue du Temple; he followed, with indifference, those who conducted him; his mania was of a mild, melancholy, and inoffensive character. The grandmother was almost famished; meat and bread were shown to her, and she followed those who bore the food with eagerness. The precious stones confided by the lapidary to his wife, were returned upon the same day to Madame Mathieu, the brokeress, who called for them. The woman was followed by Tortillard, who had learned the value of the jewels by the conversation which he had overheard at the time of Morel's arrest. The young cripple ascertained that the brokeress resided at No. 11, on the Boulevard Saint-Denis.

Rigolette informed Madeleine Morel, with great precaution, of the sudden insanity of her husband, and of the arrest of Louise. She was at first disconsolate with grief, and gave vent to her emotions by tears and lamentations; but the first paroxysm having passed away, the weak and changeable woman consoled herself in her multiplied afflictions, by the comforts and enjoyments for which she and her children were indebted to the generosity of their benefactor.

The most bitter thoughts passed through Rodolph's mind, when it recurred to the disclosure which Louise had made. Nothing is more flagrant—thus the reflections of Rodolph ran—than the almost inevitable ruin to which female domestics are exposed, in consequence of the aid which is furnished to the passions by arbitrary dominion; terror, surprise, and the imperious nature of the relation, are all arrayed against the innocence of the victim. The disparity of rank, the sanctities of the fireside, the struggles, tears, shuddering disgust of the victim, the fearful consequences entailed upon her—shame, disease, remorse, crime—are all forgotten, when the appetite is furnished by such an accessory as the authority of a master. In the case of the crime for which this unfortunate girl was arrested, how strange and unjust the law, thought Rodolph. In most crimes the accomplice is as much exposed to the penalty as the principal. The receiver of stolen goods is regarded as equally guilty with the thief. Such is the sound principle of legal construction. But when a man abandons a female of whose shame he is the author, and drives her in despair to the perpetration of what may cost her her life—is the sole cause of this crime regarded as an accomplice by the law? No. What is this more than an encouragement to the repetition of his iniquities by the policy of the law. If he is of a bold and adventurous disposition, he can even confront his victim at the bar of the court; if he is called as a witness, he can urge the authorities to execute the young woman as quickly as possible, for the benefit of public morals; he can even inform the tribunal, that he has something important to communicate, and if permission is given him to speak, he can say: "GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY,—It is true, that the miserable woman here arraigned, once rejoiced in virtue and innocence; it is no less true that I am the author of her depravity, and the father of her child: but as my taste was somewhat capricious, I abandoned her, in misery and despair, for another, with whom I was better pleased. She is a blonde, and I had a fancy for a brunette: I had a just and undisputed right thus to act—a right which society acknowledges and guarantees to me."

The jurymen will whisper to each other, that the views of the young man are correct; that no law exists to control his tastes; that he is justified in abandoning a female he has already ruined; that he has a right to exchange a blonde for a brunette.

"Now, gentlemen of the jury, this miserable woman is accused of infanticide; I confess that I am the father of the child. How does she justify herself? She says that I abandoned her in the depth of misery and want; that her reason was destroyed by her terror and despair, and that it was impossible for her to prosecute her daily labours, and provide a sustenance for herself and child. Now, gentlemen, what unsatisfactory reasons are these! Could she not have sought admission to the hospital? Would not the commissioner, upon her confession and oath, have provided for her offspring, in the asylum for foundlings? In fine, while I was lingering at the *café*, and indulging my caprices, could she not have found some less barbarous relief for her troubles? Is not her crime frightful? She seems to have been under the conviction that her duties to society were terminated by the sacrifice of her honour, and the production of her offspring. Such, gentlemen, is but a small part of maternal duties. It was incumbent upon her as a mother, if it proved to be a son, to bring him up, support him, educate him, learn him a trade, and make of him an honest and meritorious man, like his father; or, if a girl, to train her in such a manner that she would not ruin herself like her mother: yes, gentlemen, maternity has sacred duties to perform; and the wretch before you, for violating and trampling upon those duties, deserves a most exemplary punishment! For these reasons, gentlemen, hand over this wretched female to the executioner, and show yourselves virtuous, enlightened, and independent citizens. I have finished."

"This gentleman takes a very moral and comprehensive view of the question," some rich hatter, or some usurer, disguised as a foreman, will remark; "he has acted as all of us would have done in his place; for the paleness of the woman impairs her good looks, and he has preferred a brunette to her: there is no law which forbids this. As for the miserable reprobate, she has no one to blame but herself—no one forces it upon her: this crime, which makes society blush and totter to its foundation, was a voluntary act;" and the rich hatter or usurer will be right, perfectly right!

How can the author of all this woe, in the present condition of the law, be accused as an accomplice, direct or indirect? By his own confession, he has been the author of all this wretchedness; and the law regards him as an enviable and fortunate rogue.

Such is one feature of the law, as administered. Now, for another. Let a poor wretch, in utter ignorance of the law, which he cannot read, as much through stupidity as through want, purchase a rag which he knows to have been stolen,

and he is sent to the galleys for twenty years. Is it just, thus to punish him? Yes, says the law, for the following reason: if there were no receivers, there would be no thieves. No, no; show no more compassion to him who encourages crime, than to him who is actually guilty of it. Let the least connivance be visited with a terrible punishment.

Well, in all this there is much sound sense, and wise and exemplary severity; a moral and elevated tone. One could not but respect a society which visits with condign punishment, the least connivance with crime, if we could forget that the same society, which is so inexorable in inflicting penalties upon crimes against things, is so lenient in crimes against persons; that he who should maintain that there was either a legal or moral *complicité* between an unfortunate female and the author of her ruin, would be regarded as a visionary; and if he should dare to assert that, as without receivers there would be no thieves, so without fathers there would be no infanticide, society would exclaim: "Atrocity! madness!" And society would be right, always right: the gentleman who uttered those fine things to the jury, if he was fond of tragic emotions, might witness the execution of the woman of whose crime he was actually an accomplice.

The immunity extended by the laws to the male portion of the community, for offences like these, shows that the French still sacrifice to the graces, and that they are still the most given to gallantries of any nation in the universe.

CHAPTER IX.

JACQUES FERRAND.

At the time of which we are writing, a long wall, in a tottering condition, extended along near one of the extremities of the Rue du Sentier, covered with a coat of mortar, in which much broken glass was mingled. It enclosed upon one side the garden of Jacques Ferrand the notary, and terminated at a building of one story, surmounted by an attic. Two brass plates, which served the notary for a sign, were seen upon each side of the worm-eaten gate, the original colour of which could not be distinguished under the coating of mud which covered it. The gate opened into a covered passage, on the right of which was a lodge, occupied by an old, deaf porter, who bore the same relation to tailors which M. Pipelet did to bootmakers. At the left was a stable, which served as a storehouse, washroom, woodhouse, and as the habitation for a colony of rabbits, which were penned up in the manger by the porter, who consoled himself for the recent loss of his wife by rearing these domestic animals. By the side of the lodge was an entrance into a dark, narrow, and winding staircase, which led to the office, as clients were informed by a hand painted black, the forefinger of which pointed to these words upon the wall: "The office is on the second floor." On one side of a large paved yard, in which, between the interstices of the stones, grass was growing, could be seen a range of empty sheds; and on the other, a fence with bars of rusty iron, inclosing the garden, at the lower end of which was seen the pavilion, occupied by the notary alone. A flight of eight or ten steps, shattered, falling, worn, and of a greenish, mossy hue, conducted to this square pavilion, devoted to the kitchen and other depending rooms under ground, two stories above, and a garret, where Louise had dwelt. The pavilion also was in a very dilapidated state. Deep cracks furrowed the walls; the windows and blinds, once painted, had been blackened by time; the six windows upon the second floor were covered with greasy and opaque rust; but through the more transparent glasses of the first floor could be discerned cotton curtains of faded yellow, with red fringes. The side of the pavilion which looked into the garden had originally four windows, two of which were now walled up. The garden seemed to have been abandoned to parasite brambles; no cultivated beds, no shrubbery could be seen; a cluster of elms, five or six large trees, a few locusts, elders, a thin, faded grass-plot, overrun with moss, and scorched by the sun; alleys of clayish earth, which interrupted the briars, and a subterranean hothouse, were all that rendered the name garden at all appropriate. All prospect was cut off by the tall, gray, and bare walls of the surrounding buildings, occasionally pierced by small loopholes, grated over like the windows of a prison. Such was the gloomy combination which the garden and habitation of the notary presented. M. Ferrand attached great importance to this appearance, or rather, to this total absence of all neatness and taste. In the eyes of the vulgar, indifference to personal comfort is regarded, almost invariably, as a proof of disinterested benevolence; and carelessness, as a commendable austerity. The splendid establishments of other notaries, and the almost incredible magnificence of their wives' wardrobes, compared with the gloomy mansion of M. Ferrand—despising all luxuries and elegance—inspired clients with respect for his austere character, or rather with a blind confidence in the self-denial of a man who, from his extensive practice, and the large fortune which he was supposed to possess, might have talked, like many of his brethren, of "my equipages," "my country-seat," "my opera-box," &c.; while, on the contrary, he spurned all such expenditures, and practised the most rigid economy. Hence deposits, loans, legacies, trusts, all fiduciary interests demanding the most unimpeachable integrity, and the most tried fidelity, were abandoned to M. Ferrand. The notary consulted his own taste in his economical mode of living; for he despised society, show, pomp, and all dearly purchased pleasures. But even had his taste been the reverse, he would have freely sacrificed his dearest inclinations for the appearance which he had determined to maintain. We will say a few words upon the character of the man. He belonged to that large family—the misers. The miser is almost invariably represented with laughable or grotesque traits of character, the worst of which is usually selfishness or acerbity. The greater part of the race accumulate their fortune by slow and trifling savings; a very few venture upon loans at an exorbitant interest; the most venturous never dare encounter the whirlpool of stock operations; and it would be regarded as an anomaly, if a miser, for the purpose of augmenting his treasures, should commit a crime, especially murder.

The peculiarity is easily explained. Avarice is essentially a negative or passive passion. The miser, in all his plans and calculations, thinks more of growing rich by daily retrenchment of all that is not absolutely necessary, than of accumulating at the injury or prejudice of others. He is essentially conservative in his character. The miser is weak, timid, cunning, distrustful; he never acts upon the offensive; he is indiffer-

ent to the miseries of mankind, contented with the conviction that he is not the author of them; he is, above all, more devoted to what is certain than to what is probable; to the positive, than to the negative; to facts, than to theories: or, in other words, he is a miser because he has faith in nothing but the *gold* held in his coffers. Speculations, apparently the most safe, are temptations which the miser easily overcomes; for however secure the adventure may appear, there is always a chance of a loss, and he prefers to lose the interest of his money, than to place the principal in the least jeopardy. A character, therefore, so timid, so opposed to all hazard, is in direct antagonism with the daring energy of the desperado, who risks the galleys, or even his head, for the purpose of appropriating a fortune. Risk is a word which does not exist in the miser's vocabulary. It was for this reason that Jacques Ferrand was a curious specimen of the miser, or perhaps an entirely new variety of the genus; for Jacques Ferrand ran risks, and great risks.

He relied upon his cunning, for it was extremely acute; upon his hypocrisy, which was unfathomable; on his mind, fruitful and versatile; on his audacity, which was infernal, to insure impunity to his already innumerable crimes.

Another trait distinguished the notary from others, who resembled him in some particulars. Other adventurous dispositions, who shrink before no crime for the acquisition of gold, are driven, by the impetuosity of their passions, to gambling, luxurious excesses, gluttony, debauchery: but the worthy Jacques was proof against such temptations. Crafty and patient as a forger, cruel and determined as a murderer, he was as sedate and regular as the Harpagon of Molière. One single passion, or rather appetite, most degraded and beastly, and of ferocious strength, alone had power to goad with frenzy the self-controlled, calculating mind of the man. It was lust—the lust of the beast—the wolf or the tiger. When the savage violence of this impulse raged through the healthy and robust system of the man, a devouring fire seemed to take possession of his brain, obstructing the usual calm operations of his intellect, and reducing the cunning, prudent, and crafty hypocrite, as we have before said, into an ungovernable wolf or tiger—as the history of Louise has proved. The assumed apathy and audacious hypocrisy with which he denied that crime, was more characteristic of the ordinary temper of the man than bold and open violence. The instincts of the brute was the sole idea which he attached to the word love. His conduct to Louise abundantly proves that all kindness, generosity, tenderness, humanity, were absolutely unknown to him. The loan of thirteen hundred francs, at a heavy interest, to Morel, was at the same time a good speculation and a snare. He had perfect confidence in the honesty of the lapidary, and knew that the amount would one day be returned. But the beauty of Louise must have made a great impression upon him, to draw from his coffers a sum for which he might have found a more favourable investment. With the exception of this wickedness, the love of gold was the only passion of Jacques Ferrand. He loved gold, for gold alone; not for the pleasures it afforded, for he was a cynic; not for the enjoyments which it might procure, for he was not imaginative enough to enjoy in anticipation, as some misers do. As to what belonged to himself, he loved it for possession's sake; and he felt, in parting from a deposit which had been confided to his honour and integrity, the same pang, the same torture, the same despair, which Cardillac felt in parting from some ornament which his exquisite taste had made a *chef-d'œuvre* of art. The notary's reputed probity was to him a *chef-d'œuvre*, and a deposit a jewel from which he could not part without the most poignant regrets. What care, cunning, hypocrisy, skill—what *art*, in short—he had displayed, to attract these treasures to his coffers, to feign that sterling integrity, which was rewarded by these proofs of confidence, as precious as the pearls and diamonds in the golden diadems of Cardillac! The celebrated goldsmith, it is said, the more he perfected himself in his art, attached a still higher value to his jewels—considering always his last workmanship as his masterpiece. The more Jacques Ferrand became accomplished in crime, the more tenacious was he of these strong marks of public confidence—considering always the last trick which he played as his *chef-d'œuvre*. The reader will see, in the sequel of the narrative, by what profound ingenuity and machination he had succeeded in appropriating, with impunity, several very considerable sums. His secluded and mysterious life furnished him with the excitement which the gambler finds in cards or dice. Jacques Ferrand staked, against the fortune of everybody, his own hypocrisy, cunning, audacity; and his play was very successful. What he did not win, was the only loss which he could suffer, except the penalty that human justice might inflict, which he strongly, though vulgarly, compared to a chimney, which might, at any moment, fall upon his head. He regarded, also, as so much gain, the boundless esteem and blind confidence with which he inspired not only his wealthy clients, but also the middling classes and mechanics in the neighbourhood. Great numbers of them deposited funds in his hands, saying: "He is not charitable, that is true; he is a devotee, that is a misfortune; but he is more safe and solvent than the government or the savings' bank."

In spite of his consummate skill, he had committed two of those errors from which the most crafty criminals seldom escape. He had been forced by circumstances to employ two confederates: a great error, he said, which he had partially rectified, for they could not ruin him without ruining themselves; nor could any advantage be gained by denouncing to public justice themselves and the notary. His mind, upon this point, was therefore relieved from fear. Moreover, as he had not yet completed his career of crime, the evils of *complicité* were in some degree compensated, by the assistance which his accomplices afforded him in carrying out his criminal projects.

A few words as to the personal appearance of M. Ferrand, and we will immediately introduce the reader into the office of the notary, where he will meet with many of the characters that figure in this narrative. He was not more than fifty years of age, and even appeared ten years younger; of a moderate stature, with round, broad shoulders, and a form stout and thick-set. He had a reddish complexion, hirsute as a bear. His hair fell flat upon his temples: his forehead was bald, his eye-brows hardly delineated; his bilious complexion was covered with freckles, and the frightful mask became a lurid red when he was agitated by any strong emotions. His face was flat as the face of a skeleton;

his nose driven in, and his lips so thin and imperceptible, that his mouth seemed like a slit in his face. His cruel and sinister smile revealed black and decayed teeth. Closely shaved to the temples, the countenance of the man had an austere and sanctimonious, rigid and impassible expression, with eyes that were dark, lively, penetrating, and always in motion, behind large spectacles with green glasses. The sight of M. Ferrand was excellent; and, concealed by his spectacles, afforded him the advantage of observing without being observed. He was well aware how much a glance of the eye may involuntarily betray. But in spite of the impassibility of his own countenance, M. Ferrand had several times encountered magnetic glances, before which his own quailed; and in some emergencies, it is dangerous to cast down the eyes in the presence of him who questions, accuses, or judges you. The broad glasses of M. Ferrand served him, on such occasions, as a sort of protective rampart, from which he could attentively examine, with perfect impunity, every manœuvre of the enemy; for the whole world were more or less his enemies, because the whole world were his dupes, and because accusers and judges being merely enlightened or awakened dupes. He affected an extreme carelessness in his dress, which amounted to absolute uncleanliness; or, rather, he was naturally a sloven. His beard shaved but once in three days, his bald head dirty and scaly, his flat nails always delineated by a black circle, threadbare coat, greasy hat, cravat like a cord, woollen stockings, and a goatish odour emitted from his person, powerfully recommended him to his clients; giving him, in their judgment, the air of one who had a contempt for the world, and imparting to him a perfume of sanctity and practical philosophy which charmed them. "What taste, what passion, or what weakness," said they, "can tempt the notary to sacrifice our interests, or abuse our confidence? He earns sixty thousand francs a year, and yet his family is composed of a servant and a housekeeper. His solitary pleasure is to go to church on the Sabbath morning and evening: no opera could fascinate him like the grave sound of the organ; no society in the world could compare with that of the curate, by his own fireside, after a frugal dinner. His pleasure was his own probity, his pride his own honour, his happiness—religion."

Such was the opinion which the contemporaries of Jacques Ferrand formed of this rare, great, and exemplary man.

CHAPTER X.

THE OFFICE.

THERE was no difference between the office of Jacques Ferrand and other offices. His clerks resembled all other clerks. You reached it through an antechamber, furnished with old chairs. In the office proper, lined with shelves, which contained the papers of his clients, five young men bent over black desks, and talked, laughed, and scribbled incessantly. There was a waiting-room, where the head clerk usually sat, that was filled with pasteboard boxes. An empty apartment intervened, for the purpose of greater privacy, between this and the *sanctum* of the notary. Such was the entire establishment, where acts of all kinds were perpetrated.

Two o'clock had just struck from an old-fashioned clock, placed between the windows of the office. There was a perceptible agitation among the clerks, which a few fragments of their conversation will explain.

"If any one had affirmed to me that François Germain was a thief, I should have replied: 'You lie!'" said one of the young men.

"And I too."

"And so should I."

"It produced such an effect upon me to see him arrested and carried off by the guard, that I could not eat my breakfast. The daily mess of Madame Seraphin, however, is not much of a loss."

"Seventeen thousand francs is a large sum."

"A famous sum."

"During the fifteen months that Germain has been cashier, there never has been a centime missing from the notary's cash."

"I think the governor was wrong in having him arrested, since the poor fellow swore that he only took thirteen hundred francs in gold."

"And besides, he was returning the thirteen hundred francs to the vault, when the governor sent for the guard."

"That's the trouble of a man's being so austere as the notary: he has no mercy."

"At any rate, one might hesitate a moment before ruining a young man, who has hitherto sustained an excellent character."

"M. Ferrand does it for the sake of the example."

"Example! for whom? It is of no use to those who are already honest; and those that are not, know perfectly well that they are liable to exposure if they steal."

"This house is an excellent place for the police, at any rate."

"How so?"

"Why, this morning, Germain and poor Louise have both been arrested."

"As far as I am concerned, this affair of Germain does not appear clear to me."

"But he has confessed."

"He confessed that he took thirteen hundred francs, that is true; but he stoutly maintains that he has not touched the fifteen thousand francs in bank bills, and the seven hundred francs which are missing from the vault."

"In fact, since he has confessed one thing, what should prevent him from confessing the other?"

"That is true; one would be punished as much for five hundred francs as for fifteen thousand."

"Yes; but one can keep the fifteen thousand francs, and after leaving prison it would be quite a fortune, as the rogues would say."

"Here comes Jabulot, returning from an errand. He will be greatly surprised."

"What is it—what is it, my good fellows? Is there anything new concerning poor Louise?"

"You would have known it all, you lazy fellow, if you had not been gone so long."

"Do you think it is only a clerk's step to the Rue Chaillot?"

"Oh, you rogue! you rogue!"

"Well, what is the news about the famous Viscount de Saint-Remy? Has he not arrived?"

"His carriage was ready, and he sent word by his valet that he was coming immediately; but he was not in very good humour, the valet said. He has a very pretty little mansion; one like those inhabited by the lords of former times, mentioned in Faublas. Oh, Faublas! he is my

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hero, my model," said Jabulot, depositing his umbrella and removing his overshoes.

"No wonder, then, that the viscount has judgments and writs out against him."

"The officer has sent here an execution for thirty-four thousand francs against him. The creditor prefers, I know not why, to have him come and pay it at this office."

"This exquisite viscount must be able now to pay his debts; for he returned last evening from the country, where he has been secreted from the officers for three days."

"But why have they not levied upon his house and furniture?"

"He is no fool, I assure you. The house is not his own; the funiture stands in the name of his valet, who professes to hire him a furnished house; the horses and carriages are in the name of the coachman, who says he supplies the viscount with a magnificent equipage at so much per month. The Viscount de Saint-Remy has his wits about him. But what were you talking about—has anything happened here?"

"Just imagine, that about two hours ago the governor entered the office like a furious man. 'Is Germain here?' said he. 'No, sir.' 'Well, the wretch stole from me last night, seventeen thousand francs,' said the notary.

"Germain steal! that cannot be!"

"You will see soon. 'How, sir, are you sure? it is impossible!' we all exclaimed. 'I tell you, gentlemen,' said he, 'that I put yesterday in the drawer of his table, fifteen bills for one thousand francs each, besides two thousand francs in gold, inclosed in a bag. The money has all disappeared.' At this moment Father Marriton, the porter, entered and said: 'The guard is coming, sir.'"

"And Germain?"

"Wait a moment. The notary said to the porter: 'As soon as M. Germain comes in, send him up to the office, without saying a word to him. I wish to confound him in your presence, gentlemen,' added the notary. After about a quarter of an hour, Germain entered as if nothing had occurred. Mother Seraphin had just brought up our breakfast; he bowed to the notary, and said 'Good morning' to us, very tranquilly. 'Do you not intend to eat your breakfast?' said the governor to Germain. 'No, sir, I thank you,' he replied; 'I have no appetite.' You come very late.' 'Yes, sir; I had to go to Belleville this morning.' 'Probably to conceal the money you have stolen from me,' exclaimed M. Ferrand, in a furious tone."

"And Germain?"

"The poor fellow turned deadly pale, and said in a stammering voice: 'I beg of you, sir, not to ruin me.'"

"Had he stolen?"

"Hold on, I say, Jabulot. 'Do not ruin me,' said Germain to the notary. 'You confess it then, miserable wretch!' 'Yes, sir. But here is the money that is missing. I expected to be able to replace it this morning, before you were up. Unfortunately for me, an individual who had some money of mine, and whom I expected to find last evening, had gone to Belleville for two days; and I had to follow him this morning, which accounts for my being so late. Pardon me, sir; I beg of you not to ruin me. When I took the money, I knew that I should be able to replace it this morning. Here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold.' 'How! thirteen hundred francs?' said the notary. 'It is not a question of the thirteen hundred francs! You have stolen from the drawer of the table where you are employed, fifteen bills of one thousand francs each, from a green pocket-book, and two thousand francs in gold.' 'Never!' said Germain, as if he was overcome with the accusation. 'Never! I have taken thirteen hundred francs in gold, not one sous more. I have seen no pocket-book in the drawer; there were only two thousand francs in gold in a box.' 'The infamous liar!' exclaimed the notary. 'You confess that you have stolen thirteen hundred francs; you must have stolen more: but justice will decide. I will show no mercy to such a flagrant abuse of confidence; I shall make you an example.' In short, my poor Jabulot, the guard arrived about this time with the clerk of police, who issued the writ, and that is the end of it."

"Is it possible? Germain, the very cream of honesty!"

"It seemed to all of us most singular."

"It cannot be denied that there are some very strange things in the world. There were some peculiarities about Germain; he never would inform us where he lived."

"Yes, that is true."

"He always had some mystery in his look."

"That is no reason why he should steal seventeen thousand francs."

"Certainly not."

"'Twas a mere remark of mine."

"It is a very surprising piece of news—it affects me as if some one had given me a sudden blow on the head. Germain! Germain! who was so honest that he might have been absolved without confession."

"It seemed to me that he was oppressed with some presentiment of misfortune."

"Why so?"

"He has looked for some time as if he had some trouble preying upon his mind."

"Perhaps, it was concerning Louise."

"Concerning Louise?"

"I only repeat what Mother Seraphin said this morning."

"What was that? What was that?"

"That he was Louise's lover, and the father of the child."

"He must have been a sly rogue."

"Can it be so?"

"Bah!"

"It is not true."

"How do you know, Jabulot?"

"Why, not two weeks since, Germain told me that he was in love with an excellent little sempstress, that had a room in the house where he lodged. The tears came into his eyes as he spoke to me of her."

"Fudge! fudge! Jabulot; you must be green."

"He says that Faublas is his hero, and he is not wise enough to comprehend that he might be in love with one, and the lover of the other also."

"I assure you that Germain spoke seriously."

At this moment the principal clerk entered the office. "Have you been on all the errands, Jabulot?" asked he.

"Yes: I have been to the Viscount de Saint-Remy—he is coming in a few moments, to discharge the claim."

"And have you seen the Countess Macgregor?"

"I have, and here is her answer."

"And to the Countess d'Orbigny?"

"She is much obliged to the notary; she

arrived yesterday from Normandy; she was not prepared to receive an answer so soon, but here is her letter. I also visited the steward of the Marquis d'Harville; he requested the bill for the contract, in relation to which I attended at the Hotel d'Harville to witness the signature, the other morning."

"You told him that there is no haste?"

"Yes; but the steward insisted upon paying, and here is the money. By the way, I forgot the card which was left below, with the porter; there are a few words upon it. The gentleman called and left it for the notary."

The principal clerk took the card, and read: "'WALTER MURPHY will call at three o'clock, upon important business.' I do not know that name."

"Ah, I have still forgotten one thing; Mr. Badinot said: 'That it was all right; that the notary might do as he pleased, and it would be all right.'"

"Did he not give you a written reply?"

"No, sir; he said he had not time."

"Very well."

"Mr. Charles Robert will call also in the course of the day, to speak to the notary. It seems that he fought a duel yesterday, with the Duke de Lucenay."

"Was he wounded?"

"I presume not, or I should have been informed of it at his house."

"Ah! there is a carriage before the door."

"What fine and spirited horses!"

"And that large English coachman, with a white perriwig and livery of brown, and silver epaulettes like a colonel!"

"It is probably an ambassador."

"What a large moustache he has!"

"'Tis the carriage of the Viscount de Saint-Remy," said Jabulot.

"What! in that style? Excuse me."

Within a moment, the Viscount de Saint-Remy entered the office.

We have already described the charming face, the exquisite elegance, and the perfect figure of the Viscount de Saint-Remy. He had returned the day before from the farm of Arnouville, which was the property of the Duchess de Lucenay, where he had taken refuge against the pursuit of the officers, Malicorne and Bourdin. The viscount entered the office abruptly, with his hat upon his head, with a proud and haughty carriage, and partly closing his eyes, asked, with studied impertinence of tone, without looking to any one in particular: "The notary—where is he?"

"M. Ferrand is at present engaged in his private office. If you wait a moment, he will be able to receive you," said the principal clerk.

"How! wait?"

"But, sir ——"

"None of your 'buts?' Go and inform him that the Viscount de Saint-Remy is here. I think it very strange that a notary should expect me to wait. How offensive that stove is!"

"Have the kindness to pass into the next room," said the principal clerk; "I will immediately inform M. Ferrand of your presence."

The viscount shrugged his shoulders, and followed the clerk. After about a quarter of an hour, which seemed to the exquisite viscount an age, and changed his pique into rage, he was introduced into the private room of the notary. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the two men who now confronted each other. They were both profound physiognomists, and in the habit of forming an opinion, at a glance, of the individual with whom they were in intercourse. The viscount saw M. Jacques Ferrand for the first time, and was impressed with the cold, rigid, impenetrable face of the notary; with his eye concealed by his large green glasses, and his scull half covered by a black silk cap. The notary was seated before his desk, in a leather-lined arm-chair, by the side of a dilapidated fire-place filled with ashes, in which two blackened stumps were smouldering. Curtains of green cotton, almost in rags, fixed to the windows with small iron rods, concealed the lower half, through which a dull and disagreeable light penetrated the cabinet, already sufficiently forbidding. Shelves of black wood filled with labelled boxes, chairs of cherry wood covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, a mahogany clock, a damp and dirty floor, a cracked ceiling, from which spiders' webs hung in festoons, were the principal objects of attraction in the *sanctum* of M. Jacques Ferrand.

The viscount had not advanced two steps, had not opened his lips, before the notary, who knew his reputation, already hated him, for he saw in him a rival in craft; and, although M. Ferrand was himself a personification of ugliness, he did not the less detest elegance, grace, and accomplishments in others; especially when these advantages were accompanied with supreme insolence of manners. The notary usually affected extreme roughness—almost coarseness of behaviour, towards his clients, who seemed to respect him the more on account of his boorish conduct. He proposed to redouble his brutality towards the Viscount de Saint-Remy. M. Ferrand was only known to him by reputation, and he expected to behold either a simple or ridiculous scrivener; for his imagination had always portrayed in such a light those men who had the reputation for such peculiar honesty as M. Ferrand enjoyed. But the physiognomy which he actually found, inspired the viscount with fear and hatred, although no serious motive existed for either; and on account of the notary's resolute character, Saint-Remy determined to exaggerate his ordinary haughtiness and insolence of manner. The notary retained his cap upon his head, and the viscount his hat.

"Upon my word, it is very singular," said the latter, in a sharp and cutting voice, "that you should impose upon me the trouble of coming here, instead of sending to my mansion for payment of the drafts which I endorsed to M. Badinot, and for which the fellow has sued me. It is insolent for you to expect me to wait for a quarter of an hour in your antechamber."

M. Ferrand, in a very cool and collected manner, completed some calculation in which he was engaged, wiped his pen with great care upon a sponge which surrounded a broken china inkstand, and raised towards the viscount his flat, cold, imperturbable face, fairly burdened with his spectacles—or rather, the head of death, whose eyeless sockets were filled with large green glasses; and after gazing for a moment in silence upon the viscount, said, in a short, rough voice: "Where is the money?"

The *sang-froid* of the action exasperated the already excited viscount. Could not he, the idol of women, the envy of men, the paragon of Parisian fashion, the dreaded duellist, produce no more effect upon this contemptible notary? And

VISCOUNT DE SAINT-REMY.

although there were no spectators of the interview, the pride of the exquisite was shocked. "Where are the drafts?" he asked, in a short and severe tone. The notary knocked with the end of his indurated and hairy finger, upon a large leather pocket-book, and opened not his lips. The viscount, as if determined not to be outdone in laconic impertinence by the notary, drew from his coat-pocket a small case of Russian leather, fastened with clasps of gold, and drawing therefrom forty bills of a thousand francs, showed them to his companion.

"How much?" asked the notary.

"Forty thousand francs."

"Hand them over."

"Here they are, and be quick in your business; pay yourself and surrender the drafts."

The notary took the bills, and went with them to the window, turned them over one by one, with an insulting scrupulousness, as if he suspected the genuineness of the viscount's notes, who turned pale with rage.

Ferrand, as if he had divined the thoughts of his companion, turned partially towards him, and said, with an accent which it is impossible to describe: "Such things do exist."

The viscount recovered from a momentary astonishment, and asked, in a dry tone: "As what?"

"As counterfeit bank bills," responded the notary.

"What do you mean, sir, by that remark?"

Jacques Ferrand fastened, for a moment, a penetrating gaze through his green glasses, upon the viscount, and, shrugging his shoulders significantly, continued his examination of the notes.

"By heaven! M. Notary, do you know when I ask a question, that I expect to be answered?" exclaimed the viscount, irritated beyond measure by the cool impertinence of Ferrand.

"*These* are genuine," said the notary, returning to his desk, and taking therefrom a small bundle of stamped papers, in which the bills of exchange were fastened; and placing upon one of the notes for a thousand francs, three roleaux containing three hundred francs, with the drafts, said: "There is the change due you from the forty thousand francs; my client charged me to receive from you my bill of costs."

The viscount, who had with great difficulty constrained his rage during the prolonged scrutiny of the notes by M. Ferrand, and the adjustment of the account, exclaimed, without receiving his change, in a voice which trembled with rage: "I again ask you, sir, what you meant, when you said: '*Such things do exist as counterfeit bank notes?*"

"What I meant?"

"Yes, what you meant?"

"I meant, that I sent for you here upon a matter of forgery." And the green glasses of the notary were fastened upon the viscount.

"And pray, what have I to do with forgery?"

After a silence of a moment, Ferrand said to the viscount in a severe and admonishing manner: "Are you aware, sir, of the duties which devolve upon a notary?"

"Their duties appear to me to be very simple; I had forty thousand francs but a moment since, and now I have but thirteen hundred."

"You are very facetious, sir; but I have to inform you, that a notary is, in temporal affairs, what a confessor is in spiritual; his profession often makes him acquainted with secrets of a guilty and disgraceful character."

"Proceed, sir."

"He often finds himself compelled to hold intercourse with swindlers."

"Proceed, sir."

"He ought, as much as in his power, to save an honourable name from degradation."

"What have I to do with this homily?"

"Your father left you, sir, a distinguished name, which you have dishonoured."

"Do you dare to speak such insulting language?"

"Had you not been protected by the respect and esteem which his name inspires in the bosom of every honest man, instead of being now called before me, you would find yourself at this moment in the presence of the judge."

"I do not understand you."

"Two months ago, sir, you discounted, by the mediation of a broker, a draft for fifty-eight thousand francs, drawn on the firm of Meulaert and Co. of Hamburg, by one William Smith, and payable in three months to M. Grimaldi, banker, of Paris."

"Well, what of that?"

"That draft was a forgery."

"You utter what is not true."

"I repeat, the draft is a forgery; the house of Meulaert and Co. deny any dealings or engagements with William Smith, whose name even is unknown to them."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed the Viscount de Saint-Remy, with great surprise and indignation. "I have been outrageously deceived, for I received the draft as cash."

"From whom?"

"From William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert and Co. was well known to me, and I had such confidence in the honour of M. Smith, that I received the draft in payment of a sum which he owed me."

There is no such person in existence as William Smith; he is a creature of your own invention."

"You insult me, sir!"

"His signature is a forgery, like the rest."

"I tell you, that such a person as William Smith does exist; but I have, undoubtedly, been made the dupe of a misplaced confidence in his integrity."

"Unfortunate young man!"

"Explain yourself, sir," said the viscount, whose anxiety and rage were both excited by this ironical expression of compassion.

"In short, sir, the actual holder of the draft is convinced that it is a forgery of your own."

"Sir!"

"He alleges that he has proof of the fact; and, two days ago, he consulted me upon the propriety of sending for you, and restoring the draft on certain conditions, which was perfectly legal: what follows, however, is not so; and I only impart it to you by way of information. He demands, that this very day, one hundred thousand francs should be paid to him, or to-morrow the draft will be placed in the hands of the king's attorney."

"This is infamous."

"And absurd also. I told the holder of the draft, that you were almost ruined by the persecutions which have pursued you for the sum this moment paid to me, and which you must have obtained from some resource unknown to me; but he replied, that a certain distinguished lady, who might be mentioned, rich enough, would not leave you, unaided, to perish by your embarrassments.

"Enough, sir; enough."

"I grant that it is another infamy—another absurdity."

"In short, sir, what does the holder of this draft wish?"

"To take advantage, in an infamous manner, of an infamous act. I consented to make his proposition known to you, on condition that I might be permitted to brand it as an honest man should brand it. Now, this is the gist of the whole matter; if you are guilty, it is for you to choose between the ransom imposed, and the criminal court. My proceedings are altogether professional, and I desire no further connection with such a degrading transaction. The present holder of the draft is named Petit Jean. He resides at quay Billy, No. 10, on the banks of the Seine. Arrange the affair with him. You are well adapted to settle together, if you are a forger, as he affirms."

The Viscount de Saint-Remy had entered the house of the notary, with a haughty carriage, and unusual arrogance of manner. Although his life had been marked by many degrading and shameful actions, he was still sustained by a certain pride of birth, and hereditary spirit, which had never deserted him. At the commencement of this interview, regarding the notary as an adversary who only deserved his contempt, he had contented himself with ridiculing his pretensions; but when Jacques Ferrand spoke of forgery, the viscount felt overwhelmed and crushed, and now found himself completely overawed by that contemptible notary. Had he not possessed absolute self-command, he never could have restrained the emotion which the terrible and unexpected revelation produced; for such public exposure would draw after it a train of consequences, more important and endless than even the notary himself suspected.

After a moment's thought and reflection, the haughty, proud, eloquent, vain, and irritable aristocrat, stooped to implore the clemency of the coarse and vulgar man, who had so roughly addressed to him the severe language of indignant probity.

"Sir," said he, in a most cordial tone, "I thank you for the proof of interest which you have afforded me. I regret the language which I recently used to you."

"I take no interest in you, whatever," said Ferrand, harshly. "Your father was an honourable man, and I regret to see his name on the list of criminals; that is all the interest I feel."

"I repeat to you, sir, that I am incapable of the infamy of which I am accused."

"You had better make that observation to M. Petit Jean."

"But I admit that the absence of M. Smith, who has basely abused my confidence ——"

"Infamous Smith!"

"That his absence will expose me to serious inconvenience. I am innocent, and could secure an acquittal, but such an acquittal, even, is disgraceful and injurious to an honest man."

"Proceed."

"Be kind enough, sir, to employ the sum which I have just paid you, to indemnify partially the holder of the draft."

"That money is sacred, sir. It belongs to my client."

"Within two or three days I will return it to you."

"You will not be able to do it."

"I have resources."

"None which you dare acknowledge. You assert that your furniture and your horses are no longer your own. A fraudulent pretence, in my opinion."

"You are very harsh, sir. But, admitting what you assert to be true, shall I not, in an emergency of this kind, dispose of all my available means? But, as it will be absolutely impossible to raise so heavy an amount as one hundred thousand francs between this hour and to-morrow at noon, I entreat you to employ the money which I have just placed in your hands, to discharge, in part, this unfortunate draft; or else, out of your own immense resources, advance me the money, and release me from a situation of such pain and embarrassment."

"What! I?—I trust *you* with one hundred thousand francs? You must be deranged."

"Sir, I beg of you, in the name of my father, to whom you have just alluded, to ——"

"I am kind to those who deserve kindness. Appeal to me in behalf of an honest man; I despise sharpers, and, I confess, it would give me great pleasure, to see some fine gentlemen, fraudulent, lawless, debauched, and impious as yourself, stuck in the pillory, as a warning and example to the remainder. But, your horses seem to be impatient, viscount," said the notary, with a satirical smile that displayed his black teeth.

At this moment a knock was heard at the door.

"Who is that?"

"The Countess d'Orbigny," said the principal clerk.

"Request her to wait for a moment."

"The step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville?" inquired Saint-Remy.

"Yes, sir; she has business with me. Therefore, I must bid you farewell."

"Not a word upon this affair," said the viscount, in a threatening manner.

"Have I not told you, that a notary is as discreet as a confessor?"

Jacques Ferrand rang the bell, and the clerk made his appearance.

"Ask Madame d'Orbigny to walk in." Then, addressing the viscount, he said: "You had better take these thirteen hundred francs. It will assist towards the claim of M. Petit Jean."

The Countess d'Orbigny, formerly Madame Roland, entered the moment the viscount was leaving, with his countenance contracted with rage and mortification, for having humbled himself in vain before the notary.

"Good morning, Monsieur de Saint-Remy," said the countess. "It is some time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you."

"I have not had the good fortune to meet with the Countess d'Orbigny since the marriage of the Marquise d'Harville, which I attended as a witness," said the viscount, smiling, and assuming an amiable and pleased expression of countenance. "Have you resided in Normandy since that time?"

"Yes, indeed. The count prefers the country, and his tastes are my own; we are perfect provincials, and I have not been in Paris since the marriage of my beloved step-daughter with the excellent Marquis d'Harville. Do you see them often?"

"The marquis is exceedingly retiring, and rather morose, I fear; I seldom meet him in society," said the viscount, with a perceptible impatience of tone, because the conversation was

actually intolerable at such a crisis in his affairs, and because it seemed to afford infinite amusement to the notary.

The step-mother, delighted with her accidental encounter with a man so elegant and distinguished as the viscount, was not disposed so quickly to relinquish her prey.

"Is my step-daughter, the marquise, as retiring as her husband?"

"The marquise is much in the world, and always admired. But I fear that I am encroaching upon your time, and ——"

"Not at all, not at all: I assure you I regard, as a good fortune, for which I cannot be too thankful, to meet with the paragon of elegant men, the monarch of fashion. I shall be as familiar with Paris in ten minutes, as if I had never left it. Pray, how is the Duke de Lucenay, who was co-attestor of the marriage of the marquis?"

"More eccentric than ever. He started for the East, and returned suddenly, just in time to receive, yesterday morning, a sword-thrust, which I believe, however, is perfectly harmless."

"Poor duke! And is his wife as charming and bewitching as ever?"

"You know, countess, that as I have the honour of being one of her best friends, my testimony upon that subject might be received with some suspicion. Have the kindness, when you return to Aubiers, to remember me kindly to the Count d'Orbigny."

"He will be grateful, I assure you, for your remembrance, for he often inquires about you, and your success in the world: he says, that you remind him of the Duke de Lauzan."

"The comparison is very flattering, but, unfortunately, more kind than true. Farewell, countess. I hardly dare to hope that you will do me the honour of receiving me before your departure."

"I should be sorry to trouble you with calling upon me: I have merely encamped for a few days in furnished apartments; but if, during the summer, or autumn, you should happen to pass in our direction to some retreat of fashion, where the most distinguished and beautiful of ladies vie with each other for the honour of receiving you, grant us poor country folk a few days, by way of contrast and retirement from the gay, elegant, and holiday excitement of the life in the *châteaux* you gladden with your presence."

"Countess ——"

"It is unnecessary for me to say how happy the Count d'Orbigny and myself will be to welcome you. But, farewell: I believe that this benevolent humourist," and she indicated the notary, "will become fatigued with our conversation."

"Far from it, far from it, I assure you," said the notary, with an accent which rendered it still more difficult for the viscount to restrain his rage.

"Confess, viscount, that M. Ferrand is a terrible man. You will not escape many a scolding, if you have been so unfortunate as to entrust him with your affairs: he has no mercy, I assure you. But what do I say? For a man with such a reputation for elegance as yourself, to select M. Ferrand for a notary, is proof of reform. He dismisses instantly any client who is guilty of extravagance: he will not condescend to be notary for everybody." Then, addressing M. Ferrand, she said: "Are you aware of the illustrious convert you have made, M. Puritan?—the paragon of elegance—the monarch of the fashionable world?"

"It is a conversion, countess, I assure you; for the viscount leaves my office a very different man from what he entered it."

"It is not surprising that you perform a miracle, for you are a saint."

"You flatter me, countess."

The Viscount de Saint-Remy made a low bow to the Countess d'Orbigny; and, wishing to make a final effort with the notary, said, with an air the assumed coolness of which could not conceal his anxiety: "You refuse, decidedly, my dear M. Ferrand, to grant me the favour which I solicit?"

"It is some folly, I doubt not," said the countess, laughing; "be unyielding, my dear puritan."

"You hear the advice; I shall not dare refuse to follow the counsel of such a beautiful lady."

"My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things; and you know how important this is to me. Do you decidedly refuse?" asked the viscount, with an anxiety which it was difficult to hide.

The notary had the refined cruelty to hesitate for a moment: the viscount began to hope.

"How, man of iron, do you yield?" said the countess, laughing again; "are you also fascinated by the irresistible?"

"Upon my word, countess, I was about yielding, as you say; but you make me blush for my weakness," replied the notary. Then, addressing the viscount, he said to him, with an emphasis that there was no mistaking: "Seriously, it is impossible. I will not suffer you, through the caprice of a moment, to commit so foolish an act. I consider myself as the guardian of my clients, as I have no other family; and I should regard myself as an accomplice of any follies which I allowed them to commit."

"The puritan! hear the puritan!" exclaimed the countess.

"Moreover, I counsel you to see M. Petit Jean; he will think, I am sure, precisely like myself, and will answer you—no."

The viscount departed in a most desperate mood. After a moment's hesitation, he said to himself: "It must be so;" and he instructed the lacquey who held open the door, to drive to the Hotel de Lucenay.

While he is on his way to the duchess, we will admit the reader to the interview between M. Ferrand and the step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TESTAMENT.

As the reader may have forgotten the description which the marquise gave of the Countess d'Orbigny, we will repeat, that she was a small woman, with pale, light hair, and eyelashes almost white, with eyes perfectly round, and of pale blue. Her speech was honied in its tone, her look hypocritical, her manners insidious and insinuating, and an expression of art and cruelty could be detected, on a close scrutiny of her perfidious countenance.

"What a charming young man is the Viscount de Saint-Remy!" said the countess.

"Charming," said the notary; "but let us speak of business. You wrote to me from Normandy, that you wished to consult me upon upon some important affair."

"Have you not been my constant counsellor, since the good Doctor Polidori made us acquainted? By the way, have you heard from him recently?" said the countess, with apparent unconcern of manner.

"He has not written to me once since he left Paris," replied the notary, with no less indifference.

We must inform the reader that the two individuals now engaged in conversation, lied to each other in the most unscrupulous manner. The notary had recently seen Polidori, who was, in fact, one of the two accomplices to which we have alluded. He was identical with the Doctor Vincent who had proposed to him to send Louise Morel to the Martials, where he might poison her with impunity.

The step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville had now visited Paris, for the purpose of having a private conference with the same infamous scoundrel, who had for some time concealed himself under the assumed name of Cæsar Bradamanti.

"But never mind about the good doctor," continued the countess. "I am in great anxiety; my husband is unwell, and his constitution is gradually breaking. Without inspiring me with any immediate alarm, his situation torments me, or rather torments him," said Madame d'Orbigny, wiping a slight moisture from her eyes.

"What is the matter?"

"He speaks continually of a final arrangement of his affairs, of his will;" and the afflicted woman concealed, for a few moments, her face in her handkerchief.

"It is a mournful subject to contemplate, but there should be nothing distressing to you in this precaution. What are the Count d'Orbigny's intentions respecting his property?"

"Great heaven! how do I know? You may imagine when he mentions the subject to me, I do not suffer his mind to dwell long upon it."

"But has he not given you any positive information upon the subject?"

"I believe," said the countess, with a disinterested tone, "I believe he intends to give me not only all the law allows him to devise, but also—but I beg of you, let us not speak of it."

"What, then, do you propose to speak about?"

"You are right, cruel man; I must bring my mind to the contemplation of the unpleasant subject which has drawn me here. I believe, then, that the Count d'Orbigny wishes to change the character of a greater part of his fortune, in such a manner as to be able to give me a considerable sum."

"But, his daughter! his daughter!" exclaimed the notary, with a severity of tone. "I must inform you, that more than a year since, the Marquis d'Harville placed his affairs in my hands; I have recently advised him to purchase a magnificent estate. You are aware, madame, of my strictness in all my business relations; it is of but trifling importance that the Marquis d'Harville is my client; what I plead for, is the cause of justice. If your husband intends to act towards his daughter in a manner repugnant to those principles which have actuated my whole life, I must tell you plainly, that you cannot rely upon my assistance. My conduct has always been straightforward and upright."

"And mine also, and I constantly repeat to my husband what you have just told me. 'Your daughter,' I say, 'has been guilty of very unfilial conduct towards you, but there is no reason why you should disinherit her.'"

"That was good counsel; and what did he reply?"

"He replied: 'I will leave to my daughter an income of twenty-five thousand francs; she received more than a million from her mother; her husband already possesses an enormous fortune; why cannot I devise the remainder to you, my tenderest friend?—the sole support and consolation of my declining years—my guardian! my angel!' I only repeat to you these unmerited compliments," said the countess, with a modest sigh, "to show you the kind feelings of the Count d'Orbigny towards me; but I have always discouraged his bountiful intentions, and he finally requested me to take your advice."

"But I am not acquainted with the Count d'Orbigny."

"He is aware, like all the rest of the world, of your reputation and honour."

"But why did he direct you to me in particular?"

"In order to obviate my scruples and hesitation; 'I do not advise you,' he said, 'to resort to my own notary, because you might think him partial to me; but I will rely entirely upon the decision of that man, whose unshaken probity is proverbial—M. Jacques Ferrand. Should he think that your delicacy of character would be compromised by accepting my offers, I will not press them upon you any more; but if his opinion coincides with mine, you must yield your scruples.' I consented to his proposal, and in this manner you have become our arbiter. If he approves of my intentions, I will forward him,' said my husband, 'a power of attorney to convert into money my real estate and bank stock, which I will allow him to hold on deposit, so that after my decease, a reputable support, at least, will be secured to you, my tenderest friend.'"

Never had the spectacles of M. Ferrand been of greater service to him, for without their intervention, the Countess d'Orbigny would have noticed the manner in which his eyes kindled with a sudden joy, at the mention of the word deposit. He replied, however, in a tone, the moroseness of which was not much softened down: "It is enough to destroy entirely all my patience. This is the third case which has been referred to me as arbiter, always under the pretext of my probity; the only word which people seem to have in their mouths. My probity! my probity! all the advantage which it yields me, is troubles and perplexities."

"Do not be rude with me, I beg of you, my good M. Ferrand. You will, I am persuaded, be prevailed upon to write to the Count d'Orbigny, who only waits for your opinion, in order to forward the power of attorney, to change the investment."

"And to how much does the property amount?"

"He spoke, I think, of four or five hundred thousand francs."

"The sum is smaller than I supposed. It certainly is entitled to grave consideration, that you, for a number of years have devoted yourself entirely to the Count d'Orbigny, and also the fact, that his daughter is rich, very rich, and that you are without any fortune. I think that I can conscienciously approve of his intentions, and advise you, that no scruples should prevent you from accepting his offers."

"Do you really so advise me, M. Ferrand?" said the Countess d'Orbigny, who, like every one else, was a dupe of the hypocritical pretensions

[Louise Morel Burying her Child.]

of the notary, and whose mind had never been enlightened by her confidential friend, the Doctor Polidori.

"I advise you to accept."

"I shall then be obliged to conquer my hesitation," said the countess, with a sigh.

The principal clerk now knocked at the door.

"Who is it?" demanded M. Ferrand.

"The Countess Macgregor."

"Inform her that I will receive her in a moment."

"I will then leave you, my dear M. Ferrand. You must write to my husband, since such is his wish; and to-morrow he will send you the power of attorney."

"I will write."

"Adieu, my worthy and excellent counsellor."

"The people of the world have no idea how disagreeable it is to be entrusted with such deposits. The responsibility that always attends the fiduciary relation, is overwhelming. I tell you, that there is nothing so troublesome as this fine reputation for probity which I enjoy, which crowds upon my shoulders the most troublesome business of other people."

"And excites the admiration of the world," said the countess.

"The Lord be praised! I aspire to higher rewards than those of earth," said M. Ferrand, in a most sanctimonious manner.

The Countess d'Orbigny was succeeded by the Countess Sarah Macgregor.

Sarah entered the office of the notary with her characteristic composure. Jacques Ferrand was entirely unacquainted with her, and, of course, ignorant of the purport of her present visit. With the hope, therefore, of securing a new dupe, he was unusually guarded and reserved. He fastened an attentive and penetrating gaze upon the countess, and succeeded in detecting

even in the impenetrable and marble visage of the adventuress, a slight motion of the eyebrows which betrayed embarrassment.

The notary arose from his seat, pointed to a chair, and said to the countess: "You requested an interview for to-day. I was very much engaged yesterday, and I found no time until this morning to send you a reply. I hope you will excuse me."

"I was anxious to see you, sir, upon business of the greatest importance. Your reputation for honesty, goodness, and your obliging disposition, have inspired me with the hope that I shall be successful in the application which I have to make."

The notary slightly bowed.

"I am aware, sir, that your discretion is above all suspicion."

"It is a part of my duty, madame."

"You are, sir, a man inflexible and incorruptible."

"Yes, madame."

"And yet, sir, if you were informed that it is in your power to restore life, or what is worth more than life, reason, to a most afflicted mother, could you find it in your heart to refuse?"

"Explain yourself more particularly, madame, and I will reply."

"About fourteen years since, at the close of the month of December, 1824, a young man, clad in mourning apparel, applied to you, to receive as a life annuity, the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, settled upon a child, at that period three years old, whose parents wished to remain unknown."

"Proceed, madame."

"After the expiration of two years," continued Sarah, unable totally to overcome a slight emotion, "on the 28th of December, 1827, the child died."

"Before proceeding further, madame, I wish to know what interest you have in this transaction."

"The mother of the little girl is my sister, sir;* and I have her own testimony as to what I have advanced, as well as the certificate of the child's death, the letters of the person who took care of her, and the receipt of one of your clients, in whose hands you placed the one hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"Let me see the papers, madame."

Quite astonished at not being credited upon her assertion, Sarah drew from her pocket-book several papers, which the notary examined with great care.

"Well, madame, what do you desire? The certificate of death is perfectly formal. The one hundred and fifty thousand francs have reverted to my client, M. Petit Jean, by the decease of this child. It is one of the chances of men who take an annuity, as I observed to the person who entrusted me with the affair. As for the income, I paid it punctually until the death of the child."

"I take pleasure in acknowledging, sir, that nothing could be more faithful and upright than your proceedings. I believe, also, that the woman to whom the child was confided, is entitled to our gratitude; for she took excellent care of my poor little niece."

"That is very true, madame. I was so well pleased with the manner in which that woman discharged her duties, that, finding her without a situation, I took her into my service, and have ever since employed her."

"Is Madame Seraphin in your service, sir?"

"She has been my housekeeper for fourteen years; and I have nothing but praise to lavish upon her."

"Since that is the case, sir, she would be of great assistance, if you would consent to grant the request which I am about to make. I am conscious that it will appear somewhat singular to you—it may be, at the first glance, culpable; but when you are aware of all the facts, and take into consideration the intention ——"

"A culpable request, madame, I must consider you as incapable of making, as myself of granting."

"I am aware, sir, that you are the last person in the world to whom such a request should be made. But I place my hope, my only hope, upon your compassion. At all events, I may rely upon your discretion."

"Most assuredly, madame."

"I will, therefore, proceed. The death of that poor girl threw her mother into such inconsolable affliction, that, although fourteen years have elapsed, her grief is as disconsolate now as when the mournful event first occurred; and, after having been in a constant state of alarm for her life, we now fear for her reason."

"Unfortunate mother!" said M. Ferrand, with a sigh.

"Oh! yes; very unfortunate, sir! for she was compelled to blush for her daughter during her entire life; whereas, if she was now living, she would be able to recognise her legitimacy, to take all the pride and affection of a mother in her offspring; so that her incessant regrets, mingled with her other sorrows, will, we fear, deprive her of the use of her reason."

"It is unfortunate, that nothing can be done for her."

"But there can be something done, sir."

"How, madame?"

"Suppose the mother should be told: 'The child whom you believed dead, is alive; the woman who maintained her in childhood can affirm it.'"

"Such a falsehood would be cruel, madame. 'Twould only inspire the mother with hopes that would be soon disappointed."

"But if it were not a falsehood—or rather, if she could be convinced that the child actually lives?"

"It could only be accomplished by a miracle. If, to join my prayers with yours, was all that is necessary, madame, I would most cheerfully do so, from the bottom of my heart; but, unfortunately, the certificate of the child's death is formal."

"Indeed, sir, I know well that the child is dead; but if you would only render me your assistance, the evil would not be irreparable."

"You speak in riddles, madame."

"I will speak more clearly. Should my sister find to-morrow this daughter, not only her death would be averted, but she would marry the father of this child, who, like herself, has continued single to this day. My niece died at the age of six; as she was separated at such a very early age from her parents, they cannot be supposed to retain any vivid impression of her looks. Suppose a young girl of seventeen could be found—for my niece, had she lived, would have

* We think it useless to remind the reader, that the little girl alluded to was Fleur-de-Marie, the daughter of Rodolph and Sarah; and the countess, in speaking of a pretended sister, lied, for the purpose of furthering her projects, as will be seen. Sarah was under the impression, as well as Rodolph, that their daughter was dead.

now reached that age—such a girl can be easily discovered, for many are abandoned by their parents. My sister would then be told: 'Here is your daughter. Important interests have demanded that it should be represented to you that she was dead. The woman who brought her up, and a respectable notary, both affirm that such is the fact, and will prove to you the identity of the child.'"

Jacques Ferrand, after allowing the countess to proceed, without interruption, exclaimed: "Enough! enough, madame! I consider the proposition as infamous."

"Sir!"

"I am surprised, madame, that you dare to propose to me the substitution of a child—the annihilation of a certificate of death—in fine, a criminal action. It is the first time in my life that I have been compelled to endure such an outrage; and Thou, my God, knowest that I have not deserved it."

"But, sir, who can be injured by such a harmless deceit? The persons whom this stratagem will bring together, are both unmarried and without other children—both are filled with the most poignant regret for the child they have lost. To deceive them, is to restore one to life, and both to happiness, and to insure a fortunate life to some poor abandoned girl; it is, therefore, a noble and generous action, and not a crime."

"I am surprised how a disordered perception can give a virtuous colouring to the most execrable actions."

"But, sir, reflect."

"I repeat, madame, it is infamous; it is a shame for a lady of your rank, to contrive such an iniquitous stratagem. I hope, in charity, that your sister is a stranger to it."

"Sir!"

"Enough! enough, madame! I am no coxcomb, and dare, in my rough way, to tell you some harsh truths."

Sarah threw upon the notary one of her dark, profound, severe glances, and said to him, in a cool tone: "You refuse, then?"

"No new insults, madame."

"Take care!"

"What! threats?"

"Yes, threats! and to prove to you that they are not vain, learn first that I have no sister."

"How, madame?"

"I am the mother of that child."

"You?"

"*I.* I have invented a fable, with the hope of exciting your compassion. I have discovered that you are without it, and since you wish for war, I have raised the mask for war."

"War—because I refuse to become your confederate in a criminal act? What audacity!"

"Hear me, sir; your reputation for honesty is firmly established, widely disseminated, and notorious."

"Because, madame, it is deserved; and you must have lost your reason, to presume to assail it with such a temptation."

"I know, sir, better than any one else, with what mistrust and suspicion we should regard reputations for inflexible virtue, so often used to veil the infidelity of females and the knavery of men."

"Do you dare allege, madame ——"

"From the commencement of our conversation, I have doubted your title to the consideration and esteem which you enjoy."

"Indeed, madame, that doubt does honour to your penetration."

"Does it not? for it is not founded upon trifles, but on certain instincts, certain inexplicable resentments, certain presentiments, in which I have never yet been deceived."

"Let us conclude the conversation, madame."

"I will declare to you my resolution. I believe that my poor daughter is dead, but that is of no consequence. I intend most positively to asseverate that she is not dead; the most trifling circumstances may sustain the assertion—the worst causes are often pleaded. You are now in a position, which must excite much envy; there are many who will rejoice at an opportunity of attacking you. I will give it to them."

"You!"

"Yes, I!—upon some absurd pretext, say some informality in the certificate of death, or anything else—I will attack you. I will maintain, in the face of every denial, that she is not dead. I have the greatest interest to make it appear that she lives, and although lost, the suit will give great notoriety to the affair; a mother who claims her child excites universal sympathy. I shall enlist upon my side all those who envy, all those who are hostile to you, and all enthusiastic and chivalrous souls."

"The plan is as foolish as it is wicked. What interest could I have in pretending that your child was dead?"

"'Tis true the motive may be a perplexing one to discover, but, fortunately, there are lawyers equal to any emergency; and a very plausible motive occurs to me—desirous of dividing with your client the sum which depended upon the child's life, you have contrived her disappearance."

The impassible notary shrugged his shoulders.

"Had I been criminal enough to engage in any such project, I should have murdered her at once."

Sarah shuddered involuntarily. After a moment's silence, however, she continued, with bitterness: "For such a holy, sanctimonious man, that is a thought of crime drawn from a deep abyss. Have I, in shooting at random, hit the mark? It certainly has excited my suspicion, and I will fathom it. One word more. I have probably convinced you with what kind of a woman you have to deal. I crush without mercy all who are obstacles in my path. Reflect upon what I have said, for by to-morrow it must be decided. You are able to perform, with perfect impunity, all that I have demanded. In his happiness in having her restored, the father of my child will never be scrupulous on the question of identity, if the deceit, which will afford him so much happiness, is only artfully contrived. He has, besides, no other proof of the death of the child, than what was furnished by the letter I wrote him fourteen years ago; and it will be easy for me to persuade him that I deceived him upon that point—for at that time I had just cause of complaint against him, and I can say that, in my sorrow and rage, I wished to snap the last tie which bound us together. You cannot, therefore, be in the least compromised by consenting to my request. Affirm, only affirm, irreproachable man, that everything was concerted between you and Madame Seraphin, and you will obtain implicit credence. As for the one hundred and fifty thousand francs settled upon my daughter, that concerns me alone—the sum can remain in the hands of your client, who has taken possession

of it, and who need not be any the wiser on account of this device; and, finally, you will be at liberty to name your own reward."

Jacques Ferrand retained all his composure, notwithstanding the dangerous and alarming situation in which the determination of the countess placed him. The mother, believing in the decease of her daughter, had presented to him the startling proposal, to pretend that a child was living, whom, for fourteen years, he had been pretending was dead. He was too skilful not to perceive, he was too susceptible not to fear, the threats of the countess. Although the superstructure was skilfully and laboriously raised, the foundation of the notary's reputation rested upon sand. The public are as susceptible of suspicion as they are of deception; and they will trample in the dust to-morrow, the same man they exalted to the skies to-day. Who could foresee the consequences of the formidable attack upon the unstable edifice of his reputed probity? However rash the assault, the vigour with which it was pursued, could not but awaken suspicions. The unscrupulous mother had not evinced the slightest affliction for her daughter's death. She seemed merely to look upon it as an event which disconcerted some ultimate project; and dispositions of such a character were without mercy or remorse in the prosecution of their purposes of interest or revenge. With the intention of gaining time, to parry such a formidable onslaught, he said to Sarah: "You allowed me, madame, till to-morrow at noon, to deliberate upon your proposition; but I give you until the day after to-morrow to relinquish a project, the grave nature of which you do not seem fully to comprehend. If, by that time, you do not give me information by letter, that you have abandoned your rash and criminal undertaking, you will discover, to your sorrow, that justice has the means of protecting honest men, who refuse to act as confederates in an illegal scheme, and that it can strike a blow at the authors of iniquitous machinations."

"I understand you, sir; you wish one day more to reflect upon my proposal. I welcome it as an auspicious sign, and will grant the delay which you seem to desire. The day after to-morrow, at this hour, I will return; and the question will then be determined, whether there is to be peace or war between us. I repeat it—exterminating war, without mercy, without remorse." And Sarah left.

* * *

"All goes well," soliloquized the resolute woman. "The young girl in whom, through some strange caprice, Rodolph had interested himself, and placed at the farm of Bouqueval, that he might one day take her to his bosom, is, thanks to the one-eyed woman, no longer to be feared. The address of the grand duke has delivered the marquise from the snares which I had prepared; but she cannot escape the new one which I have formed, and she will be separated from Rodolph for ever. When he is reduced to such a despairing condition, separated from every object that could enlist either his sympathy or affection, will he not become an easy dupe to the tale, to which I can give every appearance of reality by the aid of the notary? And I am convinced that he will assist me, for I have thoroughly frightened him. I can easily find an orphan girl, interesting, poor, and friendless; who, under my instructions, can readily act the part of the daughter, so deeply regretted by Rodolph. I know the magnanimity of his nature, the generosity of his spirit. I have no doubt, that to give an honourable name, and the rank of her birth, to a daughter who, until that moment, has been an outcast from the affection and consideration to which she is entitled, he will renew those bonds which I once deemed indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will be fulfilled, and I shall grasp that crown which seems ever to have been dancing before me."

* * *

The Countess Macgregor had scarcely left the house of the notary, when M. Charles Robert entered it; having descended from a very elegant cabriolet, he went at once, as if he was perfectly acquainted with the locality, to the office of M. Jacques Ferrand.

The *commandant*, as he was called by Madame Pipelet, entered without ceremony the *sanctum* of the notary, whom he found in a very surly and unamiable state of mind, and who said to him, in a savage tone: "My afternoons are reserved for my clients; when you wish to speak to me, I desire you would come in the morning."

"My dear scrivener" (this *soubriquet* was one of M. Robert's pleasantries), "I have called upon a matter of weighty importance in the first place, and in the second, I wished to assure you of my bodily safety, and relieve any fears which might have disturbed you, on my account."

"What fears?"

"Do you not know?"

"What?"

"My duel."

"Your duel!"

"With the Duke de Lucenay. Can it be possible that you have not heard of it?"

"No."

"Bah!"

"What was the duel about?"

"An insult of such a serious character as to require blood to wash it away. Just conceive, that at the ball of the ambassador of * * *, the Duke de Lucenay had the boldness to assert, in my very face, that I had phlegm."

"That you *had* ——"

"Phlegm, phlegm, my dear scrivener—a disorder which must be extremely ridiculous."

"And you fought on account of that?"

"What should one fight for? Do you think that I can, with cool blood, hear a man accuse me of having phlegm, in the presence of a charming woman—the little marquise who—in fine—But, never mind; I could not suffer it to pass without bloodshed."

"Indeed!"

"We military men, you know, must always be prepared. My seconds waited upon the duke the day before yesterday, and arranged the preliminary. I instructed them to demand, in plain terms, either a duel or a retraction."

"Retraction of what?"

"Of the phlegm, to be sure, which he allowed himself to attribute to me."

The notary shrugged his shoulders.

"The seconds of the duke said: 'We are ready to do justice to the honourable character of M. Charles Robert; but the Duke de Lucenay cannot, ought not, and will not, withdraw the offensive expression.' 'Well, then, gentlemen,' my seconds replied, 'we understand that the Duke de Lucenay insists upon affirming that M. Charles Robert has the phlegm?' 'Yes. In so doing, he did not intend to injure the reputation of M. Charles Robert.' 'Then he must retract.'

'No, gentlemen; the Duke de Lucenay admits that M. Charles Robert is a brave man, but still affirms that he has the phlegm; so you see that there is no way of arranging the affair amicably.'"

"Certainly not," said the notary; "you were insulted in what an honourable man esteems his most respectable part."

"Was I not? Therefore, the preliminaries were arranged; the day, hour, and place of meeting agreed upon; and yesterday morning, at Vincennes, the duel came off in the most formal and approved manner. I slightly wounded the duke in the arm, with my sword. The seconds interfered, and declared the honour of the parties satisfied. The duke then said, in a loud voice: 'I never retract an offensive expression before a duel, but after it, I have no scruples of that kind. It is, therefore, my duty and privilege to proclaim, that I have unjustly accused M. Charles Robert of having phlegm. Gentlemen, I acknowledge not only that my worthy antagonist has not phlegm, but I affirm also, that I believe him entirely incapable of having it.' The duke then cordially extended his hand to me, and said: 'Are you satisfied?' 'We are friends for life,' I replied. I could not say less, for the duke behaved like a perfect gentleman. He might have refused any explanation; he might have merely said that I had no phlegm; but to affirm that I was incapable of ever having it, was a very delicate compliment."

"This is what I call courage nobly employed," said the notary. "But what do you want?"

"My dear notekeeper" (another pleasantry of M. Robert's), "I have called upon a matter of great importance to me. You know that it was agreed between us, when I advanced three hundred and fifty thousand francs for the purchase of your commission, that by giving you three months' notice, I could withdraw the capital upon which I receive from you the interest."

"Proceed."

"Well, then," said M. Robert, with some slight embarrassment, "I—no—but—it is that ——"

"What?"

"A mere caprice—I have an idea of becoming a landlord, my dear scrivener."

"Explain yourself—I am impatient."

"In one word, an estate has been offered to me; and, if it is agreeable to you, I wish, that is to say, I desire, to withdraw my investment from your hands, according to our stipulation."

"Indeed!"

"I hope it gives you no offence."

"Why should I be offended?"

"Because you might believe ——"

"Might believe what?"

"I am only the echo of reports."

"What reports?"

"Oh, nothing—mere trifles."

"But speak."

"Believe me, I do not withdraw my money because there are some reports in circulation respecting you."

"What reports, I ask?"

"There can be no truth in them; but some malicious people affirm that you have been drawn into some suspicious affair—mere rumours, of course—much like the accusation of our having speculated in stocks together. The report soon fell to the ground, for I will be hanged if ——"

"You do not believe your money safe in my hands? Wait a moment for me."

M. Ferrand locked the drawer of his desk, and arose.

"Where are you going, my excellent notekeeper?"

"I am going to find something to convince you of the truth of the reports in circulation, respecting my responsibility," said the notary, with irony; and opening the door of a private staircase, which gave him an access to the pavilion without passing through the office, M. Ferrand disappeared.

He had hardly gone, when the principal clerk knocked at the door.

"Come in," said M. Robert.

"Is not M. Ferrand here?"

"No, my worthy *bazochian*" (another pleasantry of M. Robert).

"A lady, concealed by a veil, wishes to speak with the notary immediately, on urgent business."

"The notary will soon return. I will tell him that the lady—by the way, is she pretty?"

"It would be difficult to say; she wears a black veil, which is so thick that her face cannot be seen."

"Well, well—I will find out who she is when I leave; and I will inform M. Ferrand of her presence, the moment he comes in."

The principal clerk now left the room.

"Where the devil can the scrivener have gone?" said M. Robert, musingly. "He is probably looking into the state of his cash account. If the reports in circulation are absurd, so much the better. I presume it is all malice. Honest people, like Jacques Ferrand, are always envied. At all events, I prefer to have my money in my own hands, and I can buy the chateau. It has Gothic towers of the age of Louis XIV. It will give me an aristocratic appearance, and won't be slow: it will not be like my love for that affected prude, the Marquise d'Harville. Did she not make me go to the expense —— no, no; I did not get the worth of my money there; as the old portress with her everlasting perriwig said, 'that flare-up cost me three thousand francs:' to be sure, I've got the furniture, and I have also the marquise in my power—but here comes the scrivener."

M. Ferrand entered, holding in his hands some papers, which he gave to M. Robert. "Here," said he, "are three hundred and fifty thousand francs in treasury notes. Within a few days we will arrange the interest. Give me a receipt."

"How!" exclaimed M. Robert, stupefied. "How! I hope you do not believe ——"

"I believe nothing."

"But ——"

"The receipt—the receipt."

"My dear notekeeper."

"Write the receipt, if you please; and inform all people who doubt my solvency in what manner I meet suspicion."

"The moment this becomes known your credit will be firmer than ever. But I ask you, seriously, to take back the money. I did not wish it at present. I told you I should need it in three months."

"M. Charles Robert, I never suffer myself to be suspected twice."

"Are you offended?"

"The receipt—the receipt."

"You are a perfect iron bar," said M. Robert, who added, while he was writing the receipt: "There is a lady, closely veiled, who wishes to speak to you immediately, on very urgent business. I shall have great sport in looking at her

as I pass out. Here is your receipt. Is it correct?"

"Yes. Now depart through the small staircase."

"But the lady?"

"I direct you to depart that way, because I wish to prevent you from seeing her."

And the notary rang for his clerk, and said to him: "Ask the lady to come in. Good afternoon, M. Robert."

"I suppose I must give up seeing her. I hope you cherish no grudge, my dear scrivener. Believe that ——"

"Yes, yes; farewell." And the notary closed the door upon M. Charles Robert.

After a few moments, the principal clerk ushered in the Duchess de Lucenay, dressed very plainly, enveloped in a large shawl, and having her face concealed by a veil of the thickest black lace, falling from a bonnet of the same colour.

Somewhat agitated, the Duchess de Lucenay approached the desk of the notary, who advanced a few steps to receive her.

"Who are you, madame, and what do you wish of me?" said Jacques Ferrand, in a rude manner. The notary was very far from an amiable mood of mind, for his temper, already soured by the threats of the countess, had been rendered entirely ungovernable by the suspicions of M. Charles Robert; and as the duchess was dressed in a very unostentatious manner, he saw no reason why he should be particularly polished in his address. As she hesitated to reply to his question, M. Ferrand asked, in a still harsher tone: "Will you explain yourself, madame?"

"Sir," said she, in an assumed voice, and attempting still more effectually to conceal her face, "can I confide to you a secret of the greatest importance?"

"Anything can be confided to me, madame; but I must know and see the person with whom I am conversing."

"Perhaps disguise is unnecessary, as I am aware that you are the soul of honour."

"To the point, madame, to the point. I have but little time to spare—there are those who are waiting for me. Who are you?"

"Never mind my name. A friend, a relative of mine, has just left your house."

"His name?"

"Florestan de Saint-Remy."

"Ah! yes," said the notary; and he cast upon the duchess a prying and inquisitive look, and said: "Well, madame?"

"The Viscount de Saint-Remy has informed me of all that occurred here."

"What has he told you, madame?"

"All."

"But what in particular?"

"You know very well to what I allude."

"I know a great variety of things about the Viscount de Saint-Remy, madame."

"I allude, sir, to this terrible affair."

"I know many terrible things about the man."

"He told me, sir, that you were merciless."

"To swindlers and forgers like him, I confess that I show but little mercy. If this Saint-Remy is a relative of yours, instead of confessing it, you should blush at the disgrace; and if you come here with the hope of moving me by your tears, you will find that your lamentations will be entirely useless; without mentioning the fact, that you are guilty of a very imprudent and disreputable act for an honest woman, if you really are one."

This brutal insolence wounded the pride and fired the patrician blood of the high-born lady. She raised her head, threw back her veil, and with a proud and haughty mien, an imperious look, and an undaunted voice, said: "I am the Duchess de Lucenay, sir!"

The appearance and attitude of the aristocratic lady was so noble and imposing, that the impassible notary was cowed before her. He drew back in silent deference, removed instinctively the black silk cap which covered his head, and made her a profound obeisance.

Nothing could be more beautiful and majestic than the face and figure of this distinguished lady. She was at this period full thirty years of age. Her face was somewhat pale and careworn; but her large, dark eyes still shone with all their pride and lustre. Her ruby lip curled with its wonted haughtiness; her complexion was brilliant, her teeth dazzling; her figure was tall and commanding, and her walk like that of a goddess on the clouds,* as the immortal Saint Simon says. With that flashing eye, the duchess, in the grand costume of the eighteenth century, would have well represented, both in her mental and physical developments, one of those adventurous duchesses who figured during the Regency; who mingled with their innumerable amours so much ease, carelessness, humour, and piquant good-nature; who apologised for their peccadilloes with such frankness and *naïvete*, that the most censorious moralists were forced to smile and say: "She is very light, very capricious, exceedingly culpable; but then she adheres to her temporary inamorato with such self-sacrificing devotion, such constancy and passion, that one is almost compelled to pardon her error. She ruins only herself, and makes so many happy." With the exception of the powder and the hoops, the Duchess de Lucenay, when her mind was not preoccupied by gloomy thoughts, was very much like one of those beings.

She had entered the office of the notary, apparently, as a woman of plebeian rank; but when her pride was wounded by the rudeness of the notary, she flashed upon him as a noble, haughty, and irritated patrician. Never before had the eyes of Jacques Ferrand encountered a goddess, whose face and whose figure seemed so harmoniously designed to illustrate the irresistible power of beauty; that anxious expression, the delicate azure hue which encircled those brilliant eyes, that dilated nostril, all announced one of those ardent natures which a certain class of men adore with as much madness as passion. Jacques Ferrand, though himself old, ugly, and disgusting, was keenly susceptible to the peculiar style of the Duchess de Lucenay's beauty. The interest which this beautiful and captivating woman felt in the Viscount de Saint-Remy, redoubled the hatred and anger of the notary against him. Distracted by all kinds of unholy passions, the monster was inspired with rage at the thought, that the conceited forger whom he had almost brought to his feet by threatening him with the assizes, had inspired with so much love this beautiful and high-born lady, that she was willing to risk for his sake a step which might prove her ruin. With these thoughts, the insolence of the notary, which had been partially paralysed, returned. Hatred, envy, a sort of ferocious resentment, mingled with the still more

* "Est in incessu pars decoris non temnenda."

DUCHESS DE LUCENAY.

degraded vice that inflamed his face and forehead. Perceiving that the Duchess de Lucenay was about to enter upon a conversation of so much delicacy, he anticipated from her great precaution and *finesse* in approaching the subject: his amazement may then be easily imagined, when the duchess addressed him with as calm and haughty an assurance as if their interview related to the most unexceptionable matter of business; and as if the propriety and reserve which she would have maintained with her equals, was entirely supererogatory with a person of his class. The insolent vulgarity of the notary had compelled her to surrender the humble character which she had with great repugnance assumed, and to reveal her real position; as if duplicity and management were too great a condescension to such a scribbler of deeds.

The Duchess de Lucenay, in spite of her faults, was refined, charitable, generous; she was the daughter of a woman who, by her revolting immorality, had degraded the holy misfortune of emigration. But the duchess had such a contempt for the opinions of certain classes, that she evinced the same supreme unconsciousness of their existence, as a Roman empress did of her slaves.

"M. Notary," said she, respectfully, "the Viscount de Saint-Remy is one of my friends; he has avowed to me the embarrassment in which he is placed, by being the victim of a double treachery. Money can arrange everything; what amount is needed to put an end to this vexatious trick?"

Jacques Ferrand was struck aghast by this *calabiere* and business-like manner of treating the matter.

"They ask one hundred thousand francs," said he, in a gruff tone, and conquering in some measure his surprise.

"You shall have the one hundred thousand francs; send immediately these troublesome documents to the Viscount de Saint-Remy."

"Where are the one hundred thousand francs, Duchess de Lucenay?"

"Have I not given you my word that you shall have that sum?"

"It must be produced before to-morrow at noon, or the accusation of forgery will be laid before the authorities."

"Very well; pay over that sum, and I will be accountable for it: as for yourself, you shall be liberally remunerated."

"But, madame, it is impossible."

"You do not expect me to believe, that a notary like yourself, cannot raise one hundred thousand francs, from one day to the next?"

"On what securities, madame?"

"What do you mean? explain yourself."

"Who will be responsible to me for that amount?"

"Myself."

"But, madame ——"

"Must I tell you, that I have an estate which yields me eighty thousand francs, only four leagues from Paris? That I think will serve for what you call securities."

"Yes, madame, with a mortgage."

"What does that word mean? Some formality, I suppose: very well, do it."

"It will take a fortnight to execute an act of that kind; besides, your husband must be made a party."

"But the estate of which I speak, belongs to me—to me alone," said the duchess, impatiently.

"No matter, madame; you are under the control of your husband, and a deed of mortgage is very long and minute."

"But once more, sir; you cannot make me believe that it is impossible for you to find one hundred thousand francs, within two hours."

"You must apply then, to your own notary or steward, madame; it is impossible for me."

"I have reasons, sir," said the duchess, with unbending pride, "for concealing my interference in this business. You are acquainted with the rogue who harasses the viscount, and that is the reason that I apply to you."

"I am highly honoured by your confidence, madame; but I cannot perform what you solicit."

"Have you not this amount?"

"I have much more than that sum in bank notes, and in good current gold, here in my vault."

"Why then so many words? is it my signature which you want? I will give it to you; let us finish this business."

"Admitting, madame, that you are in fact the Duchess de Lucenay ——"

"Come in an hour's time to the Hotel de Lucenay, and I will place my signature to whatever you desire."

"Will the duke sign also?"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Your signature alone is worthless, madame."

The notary enjoyed, with a high degree of satisfaction, the impatience of the duchess, who, under this apparent composure, concealed the most painful anxiety. She was at this moment entirely destitute of any resources. She had, on the previous day, raised a large amount of money upon her jewels; a few of which had been confided to Morel, the lapidary. This sum had been appropriated to discharge the drafts of the Viscount de Saint-Remy, and quiet some of his other creditors. M. Dubreuil, the farmer of Arnouville, had already advanced a year's rent; the time allowed to find the amount was very short, and unfortunately also, for the duchess, two of her friends to whom she might have applied in an emergency, were absent from Paris. She believed the viscount guiltless of the forgery, for he had assured her so, and she thought him the dupe of two swindlers; but it could not be denied that his situation was none the less embarrassing. Could she endure the thought of seeing *him* accused? of seeing him dragged to prison? Should he attempt to fly, his name would, nevertheless, be branded with infamous suspicions. The Duchess de Lucenay shrunk from the contemplation of such a catastrophe; for that man, in such a dishonoured position, she cherished one of those blind and overmastering passions, peculiar to women of her temperament, when the first bloom of youth has faded, and the emotions have become strengthened and matured.

Jacques Ferrand studied, attentively, the countenance of the duchess, which grew more and more beautiful the longer his eyes dwelt upon it. His debased and constrained admiration increased in its ardour, and he derived a sort of fiendish delight in torturing, by his refusal, a woman who could only entertain for him disgust and contempt. The duchess revolted from the thought of addressing to him any words which might be construed into an entreaty or appeal; but desparing of assistance from any other source, she determined to speak to him.

"Since you have in your possession the sum which I ask, why do you refuse me?"

"Because, men sometimes act from caprice, as well as women."

"What can the caprice be, which induces you to act against your interest? for I repeat to you, that whatever proposals you may make, I will accept."

"Will you accept any proposal, madame?" said the notary, in a peculiar tone.

"Yes, any. You may charge two, three, or four thousand francs more if you wish, for I will tell you frankly," said the duchess, in a tone that was almost affectionate, "I have, at present, no other resource but yourself to which I can apply. I cannot obtain, elsewhere, the sum by to-morrow, and I must have it. Do you hear me? I must positively have it, and whatever proposal you make for the service, I will accept, indifferent to the cost."

The respiration of the notary became quicker; his temples throbbed, his face was purple, and the glasses of his spectacles concealed the unnatural flame of his eye; an obscure cloud seemed to pass over the usually clear and cautious intellect of the man, and he appeared, for a moment, dispossessed of his reason. In his distempered blindness, he placed a false construction upon the language of the duchess, and his darkened intelligence presented her as one of those females commemorated in ancient story, who, driven to despair at some awful calamity which threatened those they loved, were ready to encounter any sacrifice for their deliverance. This construction was stupid as it was infamous; but we have said, that at times Jacques Ferrand was the victim of a mania which assimilated him to the tiger and the wolf: he arose abruptly, and approached the duchess.

The high-born lady arose also, overwhelmed with surprise.

"You will accept any proposal—you will not regard the cost?" said he, in a fluttered tone, still continuing to approach the duchess. "Well, then, I will lend you the sum on one condition, only on one condition, and I swear to you that ——"

He was unable to complete his declaration. By one of those freaks of human nature, by which the ludicrous has sufficient power to drown for an instant the keenest anguish and the most poignant grief, the sight of M. Ferrand's grotesque and enamoured visage, had such an irresistible effect upon the duchess, that she interrupted the sentence of the notary with a laugh so merry, so noisy, so ringing, that he started back in stupefied amazement; and without giving time to utter a word, she surrendered herself to still more hilarious laughter. She dropped her veil over her face, and between her bursts of merriment, just found time to say in broken sentences, while the notary was overpowered with hatred, rage, and fury: "Thank you, thank you; I had rather frankly apply to the Duke de Lucenay," and the duchess departed, laughing as she went, in such a boisterous fit of mirth, that although she closed the door behind her, the notary could still hear the peals ringing in his ears.

Jacques Ferrand recovered his reason to curse bitterly his insane folly and impudence, but consoled himself with the reflection, that the duchess could not allude to the interview without compromising her own character. Nevertheless, the present had been an unfortunate day for the exemplary notary, and he was plunged in the most gloomy meditations, when the door of the private staircase opened, and Madame Seraphin approached, evidently in deep emotion.

"Ah, Ferrand, you were right," exclaimed she, clasping her hands; "you had good reason for saying that it might one day be the ruin of us if we suffered *her* to live."

"Who?"

"That cursed little girl."

"How so?"

"A one-eyed woman whom I never saw before, and to whom Tournemine gave in charge the little girl, when we wished to get clear of her, fourteen years ago, under the pretence that she was dead——Oh, heaven! who could have believed it?"

"Speak! speak!"

"The one-eyed woman has been here; she was down stairs but a moment since; she told me that she knew that I was the woman who gave up the child."

"Damnation! who could have informed her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied everything, and told the one-eyed woman that it was all a lie; but it was of no use. She pretends that she has found the little girl, who has now grown up; that she knows where she is, and that it is in her power to discover the whole affair and denounce everybody."

"It seems to me as if hell was let loose upon me to-day," said the notary, in a burst of rage, which imparted a still more hideous expression to his face.

"But what shall I say to this one-eyed hag? what shall I promise her, in order to keep her quiet?"

"Does she look like a woman in easy circumstances?"

"When I called her a beggar, she showed me her bag: there was money in it."

"And does she know where the young girl is now?"

"She pretends that she does."

"And she is the daughter of the Countess Sarah Macgregor," said the notary to himself; "and this morning she offered me any given amount of money to affirm that she was not dead. Her daughter still lives, and I can restore her; but then that forged certificate of death: if inquiries are instituted, I am lost. That one crime discovered will fire the train to all the others." After a moment's thought, he again asked Madame Seraphin: "Does the one-eyed woman know where the child is to be found?"

"She pretends that she does."

"And is the woman coming back?"

"To-morrow."

"Write to Polidori to call upon me this evening, at nine o'clock."

"Would you get rid of the old woman and the young girl also? That would be too much for one operation, Ferrand."

"I tell you to write to Polidori, to be here this evening, at nine o'clock."

* * *

Towards the end of the day, Rodolph said to Murphy, who had been unable to gain an interview with the notary: "Let Baron de Graun dispatch a courier this very moment. Cecily must be in Paris within six days."

"What! for that infernal woman, the execrable wife of poor David, as beautiful as she is infamous? Pray, what good can result from it, my lord?"

"What good, Sir Walter Murphy! Within a month, you may ask that question of Jacques Ferrand."

CHAPTER XII.

DENUNCIATION.

The day of the abduction of Fleur-de-Marie by Chouette and the Schoolmaster, a man, mounted on horseback, had arrived, about ten o'clock in the evening, at the farm of Bouqueval. He said that he was sent by M. Rodolph, to comfort Madame Georges as to the disappearance of Fleur-de-Marie, and to inform her that she would shortly return. "For very important reasons," continued the man, "M. Rodolph desires, if you have anything to communicate, not to write to him at Paris, but forward the letter by this express, who will take it in charge." This emissary was in the employment of Sarah Macgregor, and she hoped, by this ruse, to tranquillize the mind of Madame Georges, and delay the information of Gousleuse's disappearance from reaching Rodolph's ears. During the interval, the countess hoped to persuade the notary to favour her base stratagem for substitu ng a child, of which we have already spoken. Nor was this all: the countess was desirous of ruining the Marquise d'Harville in the estimation of Rodolph. The day after the Marquis d'Harville had followed his wife to the house in the Rue du Temple, Tom went there, and easily engaging in conversation with Madame Pipelet, learned from her, that a lady, who was on the point of being surprised by her husband, was rescued by the ingenuity of one of her lodgers, by the name of Rodolph.

Sarah, having received from her brother this information, and possessing no satisfactory proof of the interview which Clémence had granted to M. Charles Robert, conceived another iniquitous project, so as to destroy all harmony between Rodolph and the marquis, or at least infuse such suspicions into the mind of the latter, as to lead him to forbid his wife from receiving the visits of the prince. She concluded to address to the marquis an anonymous letter, couched in the following language: "You have been basely deceived. The other day your wife, being aware that you were in pursuit of her, contrived a fictitious scheme of benevolence. She really went to that house to meet with a *certain august person*, who has taken a room on the fifth floor, under the name of Rodolph. If you doubt these facts, as they may appear somewhat singular to you, go to-morrow to No. 17, Rue du Temple, and institute inquiries; describe the features of the august person alluded to, and you will easily perceive that you are one of the most credulous and good-natured husbands that was ever *sovereignly* deceived. Do not neglect this admonition, or it may be believed that you are altogether too friendly with the *prince*."

This note was posted about five o'clock in the afternoon, by the countess, on the same day that she held her conversation with the notary.

Upon the same evening Rodolph, after having given instructions to the Baron de Graün to hasten the arrival of Cecily at Paris, went to call on the Ambassadress of * * *, with the intention of afterwards visiting the marquise, for the purpose of informing her that he had discovered a charitable intrigue which was worthy of her attention.

We will anticipate the arrival of Rodolph at the Hotel d'Harville, and introduce the reader to a conversation which took place between the marquise d'Harville and her husband, from which it will be seen that Clémence, by showing herself generous and sympathising towards her husband, whom she had recently treated with so much coldness and indifference, was already following the noble advice of Rodolph. The Marquis had not yet received the anonymous letter which was intended for his hands. The following scene occurred in the small parlour which we have already described. The marquis and his wife had recently left the table; the expression of Clémence was mild and affectionate, and her husband seemed less melancholy than usual.

"How do you intend to spend the evening?" said the marquis in a careless tone, to his wife.

"I shall not go out. What do you intend to do?"

"I do not know," he replied with a sigh. "Society is insupportable to me. I presume I shall spend this evening, as I have spent so many others—alone."

"Why alone, since I also shall remain at home?"

The marquis looked at his wife with manifest surprise.

"Certainly. But I supposed ——"

"What?"

"I supposed that when you did not visit, you would prefer to spend your evenings in solitude."

"But you know also that I am very capricious," said Clémence, smiling; "and this evening I should like to share my solitude with you. If, however, it is not agreeable to you ——"

"How amiable you are, Clémence," said the marquis, with emotion, "to anticipate a wish which I had not the courage to express."

"Do you not perceive, my dear, that your surprise is almost equivalent to a reproach?"

"A reproach? oh! no, no! But after my absurd jealousy of the other day, this kind and affectionate treatment is, I confess, a very agreeable surprise."

"Let us forget the past," said she, with a smile of angel-like sweetness.

"Can you ever forget it, my dear Clémence? Have I not had cruelty to suspect you? How can I express to what extremity a blind jealousy might not have driven me? But what is this, compared with the much more reprehensible wrongs you have suffered from me?"

"Let us forget the past, I repeat," said Clémence, suppressing a painful emotion.

"What do I hear? And can *you* forget the past? Will you forget it?"

"I hope to do so."

"Can it be true? Can I hope for such generosity? It is a happiness which I had renounced for ever."

"You now see that you were wrong."

"What a change in my whole futurity. Is it a dream? Oh! assure me that I am not deceived."

"You are not deceived."

"It is true, your expression is less forbidding; your voice is almost affectionate. Assure me that I am not under an illusion."

"No! for I need pardon myself."

"You?"

"Have I not often been unkind and cruel

towards you? Ought I not to have supposed that you must have been endowed with more than human virtue and fortitude, to have acted otherwise than you have done? Forlorn and unhappy as you were, could you resist the desire of seeking some solace in the society of a wife? Alas! when we are in misery, are we not apt to rely more upon the generosity of others? I will endeavour, henceforth, to show you that your confidence in me has not been misplaced."

"Speak again!" said the Marquis d'Harville, with his hands clasped in ecstacy.

"Our lives are for ever bound together; and I shall do all in my power to make your existence less insupportable."

"Good heaven! Is it you, Clémence, who are speaking to me?"

"Do not, I beg of you, display so much surprise; it is an implied censure on my past conduct. Who should have sympathised with you? Who should have put forth a friendly and consoling hand, if not myself? A kind inspiration has visited my mind; I have reflected, yes, maturely reflected upon the past and the future. I confess my wrongs; and I have found, I hope, the way to avoid them hereafter."

"Your wrongs, unfortunate lady?"

"Yes: I ought on the morning after our wedding-day to have appealed to your magnanimity, and have asked you, explicitly, for a separation."

"Oh, Clémence! have compassion upon me, spare me!"

"But as I did not adopt this course, and virtually accepted of my situation, after being fully aware of all its peculiarities, I ought to have consoled my regrets, by devotion to your welfare, instead of being an incessant cause of unhappiness, by my indifference and selfishness. I should have endeavoured to alleviate, in some degree, the misfortune with which you are afflicted. I should then have gradually become attached to the duty of commiseration, even on account of the self-denial and sacrifices which it imposed, and I should have found an abundant recompense in your gratitude. But, good heaven! what afflicts you, my dear? you weep."

"Yes, I shed tears; but they are of joy. You cannot conceive of the new emotion with which your words have inspired me. Suffer me to weep; for never before have I been so impressed with my guilt, in chaining you to such a miserable being as I am."

"And I never have felt more disposed to pardon you. These tears of joy, which you have shed, reveal to me, that I can inspire you with a degree of happiness, of which I did not dream was in my power to excite. Have courage, then, my dear husband. Instead of a distinguished career, let us seek contentment, in the faithful discharge of those domestic duties which Providence has imposed. Let us be indulgent to each other; and if we should ever falter in this resolution, let us turn our eyes to the cradle of our child; let us concentrate upon her all our affections, and a serene and holy enjoyment will at least be ours."

"You are an angel! an angel!" exclaimed the Marquis d'Harville, clasping his hands together, and contemplating his wife with the most exalted admiration. "You cannot imagine what mingled emotions of pleasure and remorse your words inspire. Your bitterest reproaches, your severest invectives, have never so completely crushed me, as your magnanimous kindness, your generous resignation. In spite of myself, I will dare to hope, and to cast forward my eyes to a delightful future."

"And you may place, Albert, a most implicit confidence in the words which I have spoken. I have formed this resolution with deliberation; and I shall adhere to it most faithfully, I assure you. At some future day, I will give you evidence of my assertion."

"Evidence!" exclaimed the marquis, more and more exalted with a happiness which he had so little anticipated. "Evidence! I need none. Your look, your accent, that expression of divine commiseration which illumines your countenance, the delight inspired in me, the throbbings of my heart, are not these sufficient proof that you speak the words of truth! But you know, dear Clémence, that man is insatiable in his hopes," continued the marquis, approaching the fauteuil of his wife. "Your noble and touching words have awakened within me a hope, of which, yesterday, I did not dare to dream."

"Explain yourself, I beg of you!" said Clémence, somewhat agitated by these words of her husband.

"Yes," said he, taking the hand of his wife, "yes, Clémence, by unintermitted kindness, by tenderness, which knows neither limit nor degree, by the entire devotion of my soul, by boundless love, I hope to win your own; to inspire you, not with the mere affection which conjugal duty imposes, but with a passion as ardent and unreserved as my own. Whenever I have presumed to speak to you of it, you have always displayed so much indifference, so much coldness; you have never spoken words of kindness to me—such words as have drawn tears from my eyes this evening, and overpowered me with happiness. My love for you has deserved a joy as great; and, hitherto, I have only been rewarded by silent suffering. The melancholy which devoured me, my distaste for all society, my gloomy thoughts, proceeded solely from such a cause. Imagine my distress, my despair, my weary vigils, while conscious that her repugnance separates me from a wife that I adore, with all the ardour and endearments of love; a wife who was sheltered by the same roof with myself. If you were conscious of the tears which I have shed, of the anguish which I have suffered, it would have moved you! You have imagined my anguish, and will now show me compassion. The sight of your ineffable beauty and enchanting graces, will not now be my daily misfortune; the treasure which I prize above all things earthly, will be mine. My heart, my joy, my fancy, all inform me that it will be so, my wife, my dearest wife!" and he covered her hand with passionate kisses. Clémence suddenly withdrew her hand. Her countenance assured the marquis that he had misconstrued her feelings.

The blow was a terrible one. The darkest cloud passed over the face of the marquis, and he relapsed into his habitual gloom. The marquise tenderly returned her hand, and said: "Albert, I shall always be the most devoted of friends, the most affectionate of sisters. Pardon me, if my words have awakened hopes which I never can fulfil."

"Never!" exclaimed the marquis, casting upon his wife a supplicating gaze.

"Never!" And the accent with which the

word was uttered, revealed the unalterable, irrevocable resolution of his wife.

Clémence, restored to her natural generosity and kindness of heart, by the counsels of Rodolph, had determined to lavish upon the marquis the tenderest regard; but she was too true to the holy instinct within her, to affect an emotion which she did not feel. An impression, more unconquerable than fear, hatred, or contempt—an inexpressible repugnance—separated the marquise for ever from her husband.

After a painful moment of silence, the marquis passed his hand over his moistened eyes, and said to his wife, in a heart-broken tone: "Pardon me for my error! Pardon the hope which I have indulged."

There was another painful pause, and he exclaimed: "How miserably wretched I am!"

"My dear husband," said Clémence, most gently, "I do not wish to address to you undeserved reproaches; but do you regard as nothing my promise to be to you the most affectionate sister? You will receive from my devoted friendship, more kindness and attention than love could bestow. I pray of you to hope for happier days. You have thus far found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; but you will now find great consolation in my sympathy and affection."

A valet now entered, and announced his royal highness the grand duke of Gerolstein, and asked if the marquise would receive a call?

Clémence cast an inquiring glance towards her husband.

The marquis recovered his composure, and said to his wife: "Certainly."

The valet left the room.

"Pardon me, my dear," said Clémence, "but I gave no orders respecting the door; and as it is a long time since you have seen the prince, he will be happy to find you here."

"I am ever happy to see him; but I am so agitated at this moment, that I wish he had postponed his call to some other day."

"I understand you; but what can we do? He is coming:" and at this moment Rodolph entered the room.

"I am exceedingly fortunate, marquise, in finding you at home. And my gratification is redoubled, since it also has procured me the pleasure of greeting you, my dear Albert," he added, turning to the marquis, whose hand he cordially grasped.

"It is indeed very long, my lord, since I have had the pleasure of paying my respects to you."

"And whose fault is it, thou invisible one? The first time I waited upon the marquise, I inquired for you, and you were absent. It is now three weeks since you have been apparently unconscious of my existence. It is very wrong."

"Show him no mercy, my lord," said Clémence, with a smile. "The marquis is the more to blame, because I know that he entertains for your royal highness the greatest respect and esteem, and his negligence might induce you to doubt it."

"You can judge of my vanity, marquise, when I assure you, that whatever the marquis may do, it will always be impossible for me to doubt his affection; but I confess I should not say this, for I fear it will encourage his negligence."

"Believe me, my lord, that many unforeseen circumstances have prevented me from enjoying more frequently, the society with which you honour me."

"Between us, my dear Albert, I think that you are rather too platonic in your friendships: assured of being loved, you do not seem anxious to give or receive proofs of attachment."

By a breach of etiquette, at which the marquise was slightly annoyed, a valet entered, bringing a letter to the marquis. It was the anonymous denunciation in which the countess accused Rodolph of being the lover of the marquise."

The marquis, out of deference to the prince, pushed back the silver salver, which held the letter, and said to the valet in a low voice: "Presently."

"My dear Albert," said Rodolph, in a cordial tone, "why such ceremony with me?"

"My lord!"

"With the permission of the marquise, I beg of you to read the letter."

"I assure you, my lord, that I am in no haste."

"Once more, I beseech you to read it."

"But, my lord——"

"I insist upon it."

"Since your royal highness insists," said the marquis, taking the letter from the salver.

"Certainly, I insist upon your treating me as a friend." Then turning to the marquise, while her husband was breaking the seal of the fatal billet, the contents of which Rodolph did not suspect, he said, smiling: "What a triumph it is for you, marquise, to force such an obstinate will to yield."

The Marquis d'Harville went to one of the lights on the mantel-piece, and opened the letter. His features remained calm; a nervous trembling of the hand, almost imperceptible, alone indicated his emotion. After a moment's hesitation, he placed the letter in the pocket of his vest.

"At the risk of being again regarded as a recluse, I must solicit permission from you, my lord," said the marquis, smiling, "to retire and answer this letter, which is more important than I at first supposed."

"Shall I not see you again this evening?"

"I do not think I shall have that honour, my lord. I hope your royal highness will excuse me."

"What a difficult man to serve!" said Rodolph, gaily. "Will you not try to retain him, madame?"

"I dare not attempt a task in which your royal highness has failed."

"Seriously, my dear Albert, try to return as soon as your letter is written; if not, promise to grant me a few moments, some morning. I have a thousand things which I wish to tell you."

"Your royal highness is very kind," said the marquis, making a low bow: and he retired, leaving Clémence with the prince.

"Your husband seems to be labouring under some distress of mind; his smile appeared to me to be forced."

"When your royal highness first entered, the marquis was powerfully moved; and he had great difficulty in concealing it from you."

"I arrived, perhaps, at an unfortunate time."

"No, my lord; you interrupted a conversation which was becoming very painful to me."

"How so?"

"I had informed the marquis of the new course of conduct which I had determined to pursue

towards him, promising him all the sympathy and consolation in my power to bestow."

"How happy he must have felt!"

"At first, he was as much delighted as I was myself. His tears, his joy, awakened emotions which were novel to me. Formerly, I consulted my revenge by addressing reproaches and invectives to him, but it was a revenge which reacted upon myself. But how different were my feelings this evening! I asked my husband if he was going out; he replied to me, that he should spend the evening as he had frequently done—alone. I invited him to remain with me. You should have seen, my lord, how radiant with joy his ever-gloomy features suddenly became. You were certainly right; nothing is more delightful than to surprise with sudden happiness."

"But how did such tokens of kindness induce the painful conversation to which you have alluded?"

"Alas, my lord!" said Clémence, blushing, "to the hopes which I had encouraged, because it was in my power to fulfil them, succeeded others which I had endeavoured scrupulously to suppress, because it will be for ever impossible for me to gratify them. As much as I have been moved by his gratitude, so much the more was I alarmed when his language became passionate; and, finally, when in his exultation he pressed his lips to my hand, a mortal chill came over me: I could not conceal my repugnance, and wounded his feelings grievously. The marquis is now convinced, that he can never expect anything from me but the most affectionate and devoted friendship."

"I pity him, without being able to blame you. There are some susceptibilities almost sacred. Poor Albert! so good, so upright, of such a noble heart and magnanimous soul! I have for a long time most keenly sympathized with the sorrow that devours him, though I was entirely ignorant of the cause. Let us hope everything from the effect of time, and from the operation of his own rational understanding. He will soon become sensible of the value of that affection which you proffer; and he will submit with resignation, as he has before done, when he did not enjoy the relief which your sympathy and consolation must afford."

"And which hereafter shall never fail, my lord."

"But let us now direct our thoughts to the misfortunes of others. I promised you a charitable enterprise, having all the interest of a romance, and I have come to fulfil my promise."

"So soon, my lord? What happiness it will afford!"

"It was a happy inspiration which directed my attention to that room in the Rue du Temple, of which I spoke. You cannot imagine all the touching and interesting scenes of which I have been a spectator. In the first place, your *protegés* in the garret are in the enjoyment of all the happiness which you promised, and yet they have had great trials to endure. But I do not wish to make you melancholy: I will inform you some day, how many evils can overwhelm a single family."

"How excessive must be their gratitude to you!"

"It is your name which they bless."

"You have then assisted them in my name, my lord?"

"So as to wound their sensibility the less. Besides, I only fulfilled your promises."

"I shall go and undeceive them, and inform them how much they are obliged to you."

"I beg of you not to do that. You know that I have a room in that house, and you will be exposed to a new anonymous attack from your enemies or mine. Besides, the Morels are now entirely relieved from want, and there are others who demand our attention. Let us think of the benevolent intrigue to which I allude. It relates to a poor mother and her daughter, who were once in affluence, but now, in consequence of an infamous fraud, are reduced to most abject and frightful poverty."

"Unfortunate females! Where is their place of residence, my lord?"

"I do not know."

"But how did you become acquainted with their misery?"

"I went yesterday to the Temple, with the peculiarities of which I suppose you are entirely unacquainted."

"I confess it, my lord."

"It is a very curious bazaar, I assure you. I went there with my neighbour, to make a few purchases."

"Your neighbour?"

"Do I not reside in the Rue du Temple?"

"I am very forgetful, my lord."

"My neighbour is a most charming grisette. Her name is Rigolette; she laughs constantly, and never had a lover."

"What unparalleled virtue for a grisette!"

"She does not attribute her unexceptionable conduct to virtue precisely, but says that she has not sufficient leisure to fall in love, that she cannot afford the time; for she is obliged to work from twelve to fifteen hours a day, to earn the twenty-five sous upon which she lives."

"Can she sustain existence on so small a sum?"

"Certainly. She supplies herself with every necessity, and even keeps, as a sort of luxury, two birds, who eat more than she does herself. Her little room is a perfect pattern of neatness, and her dress exceedingly coquettish."

"She must be a miracle of economy to live upon twenty-five sous a day."

"She is a prodigy of order, economy, industry, and practical philosophy, I assure you. I recommend her to your patronage. She professes to be a perfect adept with her needle: at any rate, you would not be obliged to wear the clothes which she may make."

"To-morrow, I will send her some work. Poor girl! to be compelled to live entirely upon a sum which is so inconsiderable in the expenditure of the rich, that our most trifling caprice costs a hundred times that amount."

"I am rejoiced that you have determined to interest yourself in my little *protegé*. I will now explain our new adventure. I had gone to the Temple with Mademoiselle Rigolette, to purchase some furniture designed for the poor people in the garret, when upon accidentally examining an old secretary which was for sale, I found the draft of a letter written by a female to some individual, in which she complained that herself and daughter were reduced to the greatest misery on account of the dishonesty of a lawyer. The secretary was a part of a lot of furniture, which a woman of middle age had been compelled by her penury to sell; and I was told by the dealer, that the woman and her daughter seemed to belong to the upper classes of society, and to bear their reverses with great fortitude and pride."

"And you do not know where they reside?"

"I have, unfortunately, not been able to discover; but I have given orders to the Baron de Graün to learn where they live, and to apply, if necessary, to the head of police. It is probable, that since they have been stripped of everything, the mother and daughter have taken lodgings in some poor furnished apartments. If that is the case, I have strong hopes; for the proprietors of such houses are in the habit of reporting daily all the new arrivals."

"What a singular concurrence of circumstances!" said the marquise; "how attractive these investigations must be!"

"I have not yet told you all. In one corner of the letter which I found in the old secretary, these words were written: '*Write to the Duchess de Lucenay.*'"

"How fortunate! Perhaps we may be able to gain some information from the duchess. But as we do not know the name of the lady, how shall we be able to describe her?" added the marquise, in a less joyful tone.

"It will be necessary to ask her whether she is not acquainted with a widow still young, of an imposing countenance, and whose daughter, of sixteen or seventeen years of age, is named Claire: I remember the name."

"It is the name of my own child! It is a new motive for me to interest myself in these people."

"I forgot to mention to you, that the brother of this unfortunate lady committed suicide several months ago."

"If the Duchess de Lucenay is at all acquainted with the family, I think that this information will recall it to her mind: the melancholy death of the brother must alone have made an impression upon her. I desire very much to hasten to her immediately. I will certainly write to her this evening, so as to secure an interview with her to-morrow morning. Who are these unfortunate beings? From what you know of their history, my lord, they seem to be connected with the higher orders of society, and their distress and misery must on that account carry with it a twofold sting."

"And to this wretchedness they have been reduced by the theft of a notary—an infamous rogue, whose crimes are without number—a certain Jacques Ferrand."

"The notary of my husband!" exclaimed Clémence; "the notary of my stepmother! But are you not mistaken, my lord? M. Ferrand is considered one of the most honest men in the world.

"I have convincing evidence that he has imposed upon public credulity. But I beg of you not to disclose my suspicions, or rather my convictions, concerning the reprobate; for he is as adroit as he is criminal, and in order to unmask him effectually, it is necessary for him to believe that at present he is perfectly secure from detection. Yes, he is the man who has reduced these unfortunate females to want, by disowning a deposit confided to his hands by the brother of this unfortunate widow."

"And what was the sum?"

"It embraced their entire property—it was their only dependence."

"What a crime!"

"A crime," said Rodolph, "which has none of the ordinary palliatives of iniquity: neither want nor passion, neither the famine which drives to theft, nor the vengeance which excites to murder. The notary was rich; he was invested by society with an almost sacerdotal character—a character which solicited and enforced confidence—and had no excuse but implacable cupidity for his crime. The knife of the assassin suddenly terminates existence and suffering; but Jacques Ferrand murders slowly, by torturing his victim to death by despair and misery. To this man, neither the hard-earned savings of the poor, nor the sole patrimony of the orphan, are sacred. Confide to him gold, and a temptation is presented which he cannot resist. He reduces to disconsolate beggary those who, by toil and privation, have provided for their old age food and shelter. This is not all! What a frightful train of consequences does this infamous peculation drag after it! Suppose the unfortunate widow, to whom we have alluded, should be taken from the life which he has rendered desolate; her daughter, young and captivating, without support, deprived of every resource, unfitted, by education, to earn her livelihood, and habituated to ease and affluence, is immediately placed between starvation and dishonour. By his infamous fraud, this notary would have been the author of the death of the mother, and the ruin of the daughter—would have killed the body of the one, and the soul of the other. Not, like the murderer, by a sudden blow, but by prolonging through life the agony of death!"

Clémence had never before heard Rodolph speak with so much bitterness and indignation. She listened to him in silence, struck by an eloquence which, though severe, revealed an unconquerable hatred of crime.

"Pardon me, madame," said Rodolph, after a few moments' silence; "I cannot restrain my emotions, when I think of the misfortunes to which this widow and her daughter may be exposed. Believe me, the consequences of poverty are seldom exaggerated."

"I am under obligations to you, my lord, for having, by this frightful exposure, increased, if possible, my lively sympathy for the unfortunate mother and child. She must suffer the keenest anguish on her daughter's account. It is awful to contemplate! But we must succour—we must save them—we must give to them a futurity of joy! I am thankful to God, that I am rich; but not so wealthy as I desire to be, since I have found this new use for money. But, if necessary, I can apply to the Marquis d'Harville, and will render him so happy, that he cannot refuse the indulgence of this new caprice: I perceive that, hereafter, I shall have many. You said, my lord, that our *protegés* were proud. I admire them the more on that account. Pride, in misfortune, always attends an elevated soul. I will discover the means of affording them relief, and at the same time conceal from them its source. It is true that it will be difficult, but my enjoyment will be increased thereby. I have already a plan in my mind. You shall be satisfied, my lord, with my cunning and skill."

"I already foresee the most Machiavelian combination," said Rodolph, smiling.

"But we must first discover them. I long for the arrival of to-morrow. After I have applied to the Duchess de Lucenay, I will go to their last residence: I will make inquiry of the neighbours; I will examine for myself. I should be so gratified to arrive, through my own exertions, at the result I desire! I know I shall succeed. What a captivating adventure it is! Poor creatures! my interest for them increases, when I think of my own daughter."

A melancholy smile visited the face of Rodolph, at observing the charitable eagerness with which a young woman of twenty years sought to forget, in benevolent enterprises, the afflictions which had fallen to her lot. The eyes of Clémence sparkled with unusual brilliancy; her cheeks were flushed with excitement, and the animation of her manner imparted a new charm to her fascinating countenance.

Madame d'Harville perceived that Rodolph was observing her with attention and silence; she blushed slightly, and cast down her eyes, but quickly raising them, said with a confusion that was charming: "You laugh at my enthusiasm, my lord! it springs from my impatience to enjoy pursuits which will animate an existence, thus far, of unrelieved gloom. Such was not the futurity which I anticipated. I am forced, by my destiny, to relinquish for ever, a sentiment which is the source of the greatest happiness known on earth. I cannot indulge it without guilt," added the marquise with a sigh; "but, thanks to you, my protector, I have created other interests for myself: charity will replace love. I am already indebted to your advice for the most novel and agreeable emotions. Your words, my lord, exert a controlling influence upon me. Your ideas appear to me to be more right, kind, and suggestive, the more I reflect and meditate upon them. And when I think that your interest did not terminate with merely pitying sorrows, which you might have regarded with indifference; but you followed up compassion with advice of the most salutary nature, and are now guiding, step by step, a suffering and sorrowful heart, in the new path which you have opened before me. My lord, what treasures of kindness reside in your soul! from what fountain has this sympathy sprung?"

"I have suffered much—I still suffer; that is the source of my susceptibility to the affliction of others."

"Are you unhappy?—you, my lord?"

"Yes! it might be said, that in order to prepare me for an apt and lively sympathy with every misfortune, I have been compelled to endure them all. As a lover, my happiness was sacrificed by the woman whom I loved with all the ardent and confiding passions of youth; as a husband, sorrow reached me through my wife; as a son, I was unhappy in my father; as a father, I have been rendered miserable by the death of my child."

"I thought, my lord, that the grand duchess left you no children."

"Such was the fact; but before my marriage with her, I had a daughter whose death, though I scarcely ever saw her, has poisoned my whole life, and my sorrow increases as I advance in age; every year adds to its bitterness, and seems to proportion itself to the advancing age which my daughter would have attained. Had she lived, she would now have been seventeen years old."

"And is her mother still living?" asked Clémence, with some hesitation.

"Do not mention her," said Rodolph, inspired with the most unpleasant thoughts, as his mind reverted to Sarah; "her mother is an unworthy creature, with a soul steeped in selfishness and ambition. I sometimes ask myself whether the death of my daughter ought not to be preferred to her exposure to the influence of such a mother."

These expressions of Rodolph conveyed a certain kind of agreeable emotion to the mind of Clémence.

"I can readily imagine the double pang which you suffered in the loss of your daughter."

"I could have loved her with such an unreserved affection. It seems to me that with a prince, the interest which attaches to our sons is one of kindred name and political considerations. But a daughter! a daughter is loved solely on her own account. When one has been constantly exposed to the darker phases, the most revolting traits of human character, what solace and refreshment it affords to contemplate the perfect purity of a virgin soul; to breathe the clear atmosphere which surrounds it, to watch with an anxious tenderness the first development of thought, the first flight of innocent fancy, the first ingenuous transport! The fondest, proudest of mothers, is too much herself like the daughter, to enjoy to its extent this exquisite pleasure. She would be touched nearer by the manly and daring qualities of a brave and accomplished son. Do you not know the secret which renders the love a mother has for her son, and a father for his daughter, so interesting? It is because, in each of these relations, there is a feebler being clinging to their affection for protection; the son protects the mother, the father the daughter."

"You are right, my lord."

"But why should the mind dwell upon these keen and elevated pleasures, when it is for ever debarred from their enjoyment?" said Rodolph, in a tone of touching grief.

Clémence could not restrain a tear, so distressing and melancholy was the accent of the prince.

After a moment of silence, almost abashed by the emotion which he had allowed to gain an ascendancy, he said with a sad smile, to the marquise: "I hope you will pardon me; my regrets and bitter recollections have for a moment overpowered me; you must excuse me."

"Believe me, my lord, that I partake of your sorrows; and I have the best right so to do, for you have partaken of mine: I only regret that I can offer you no consolation."

"The evidence that you are interested in my afflictions, is itself most agreeable, and, I doubt not, will be salutary. It is almost a relief to inform one of whose kindness you feel assured, that you suffer; and I should not have spoken so much of my sorrows, if the nature of our conversation had not revived painful memories. I know that it is a weakness, but I can scarcely hear a young girl mentioned, without reverting to the one whom I lost."

"The association is very natural. Since I saw you last, my lord, I have accompanied an acquaintance, who is a patroness of the work of the young inmates of Saint-Lazare, to visit that prison; it contains many very culpable creatures. Had I not been a mother, I should have, doubtless, judged them with still more severity; but I could not restrain an emotion of compassion, when I thought that they would not have been lost unless they had been abandoned in childhood. I know not why it is, but after such reflections, it seems to me that I am attached by a still stronger love to my own daughter."

"Take courage, take courage," said Rodolph, with a melancholy smile; "this conversation has removed all despondency from my mind concerning you; a safe path is now opened before you; by pursuing it, you will pass, without stumbling, through those years of life which are

so dangerous to a female; especially to one so pre-eminently endowed as you are. You will have yet to encounter many struggles, much suffering, for you are still very young; but your strength will be sustained by the thought of the good you have already done, and may still do."

The marquise melted into tears. "I hope at least, my lord, that your advice, your support, will never fail me."

"Never fear: I shall always take the greatest interest in all that concerns you; I shall always, to the very extent of my power, contribute to your happiness, and to his to whom I have vowed the most enduring friendship."

"I thank you for the promise, my lord," said Clémence, drying her tears; I am conscious that, without your assistance my strength would have abandoned me; and I now solemnly assure you, that I will courageously perform every duty."

At these words, a small door, concealed by the hangings, suddenly opened; Clémence uttered a cry, and even Rodolph started. The Marquis d'Harville made his appearance, pale, agitated, with his eyes moistened with recent tears.

The first astonishment having subsided, the marquis said, giving to the prince the letter of the countess: "My lord, here is an infamous letter, which I just now received in your presence. Please to burn it up, after you have read it."

Clémence looked at her husband with amazement.

"It is a most false and infamous denunciation," said Rodolph with indignation.

"My lord, there is something still more base than this anonymous meanness."

"To what do you allude?"

"Instead of frankly and boldly disclosing to you this miserable fabrication, I concealed it from you. I assumed composure, while rage, jealousy, and despair, were in my heart. And that is not all. I shamefully hid myself behind that door, in order to overhear your conversation; to act as a spy upon your conduct, wretched enough to distrust your fidelity and honour. The author of these letters must be well acquainted with the man to whom they are directed. He must know the jealousy of my disposition, and the weakness of my head. Tell me, my lord, what atonement I shall make to you? I have not lost a word of your conversation. I am aware of the motives which attract you to the Rue du Temple. After having been credulous and base enough to become a virtual accomplice of this malicious calumniator, by yielding to him a momentary credence, ought I not, upon my knees, to entreat your pity, and solicit your forgiveness? I will do it, my lord. I will do it, Clémence; for my only hope is in your generosity."

"Good heaven! My dear Albert, what have I to forgive?" said Rodolph, extending both hands to the marquis, with the utmost cordiality. "Now that you have become acquainted with our secrets, I can lecture you with pleasure. I have now forced myself into your confidence, and, what is still better, you have become the confidant of the marquise, and know what you can anticipate from her noble soul."

"And you, Clémence," said the marquis to his wife, "will you again forgive me?"

"Yes, on condition that you will aid me in securing your own happiness:" and she extended her hand to her husband, who pressed it with emotion.

"Well, my dear marquis," exclaimed Rodolph, "we have to thank our enemies for rendering us more intimate than we were before. They have also been to yourself the cause of a more just appreciation of the marquise. She was never more devoted to you than she is at present. Confess that we are nobly revenged for their malice and cruelty. We will content ourselves with it, until we can obtain a more satisfactory vengeance. I suspect the hand which aimed the shaft, and I am not accustomed to bear patiently injuries directed against my friends. It is also a personal attack upon myself. Farewell, marquise; since our intrigue is discovered, you will no longer be unaided in your efforts to succour our beneficiares. We will soon concert some mysterious enterprise, and the marquis must sharpen his cunning if he discovers it."

After having accompanied the grand duke to his carriage, to renew his protestations, the marquis retired to his room without seeing Clémence again.

CHAPTER XIII.

REFLECTIONS.

It would be difficult to express the tumult and conflict of the Marquis d'Harville's emotions, when he found himself alone. He rejoiced at the exposure of the falsehood of the accusation against Rodolph and Clémence, and he mourned most bitterly over the final prostration of the hope of securing her love. The generous and affectionate sentiments which, in her conversation with Rodolph, Clémence had evinced towards himself, presented, in the most vivid colours, the peculiar injustice of his culpable selfishness, in binding the unfortunate lady, by an indissoluble tie, to such a wretched destiny. Far from consoling him, the conversation which he had overheard, had changed his despondency into despair. There is in a life of opulence without employment, this terrible evil — that nothing diverts the mind from its sorrows, nor prevents it from preying upon itself. Great mental afflictions have an uncontrolled ascendancy in a mind which has no future necessities to contemplate, no daily labour to engross the attention. The possession of everything which gold can purchase, but stimulates the desire and deepens the regret for what gold cannot secure.

The grief of the marquis was desperate, and could only be relieved by the possession of that to which he was entitled by every legal and moral obligation; and he regarded as a bitter irony the maxim of the law, that "the wife belongs to the husband." To what power could he appeal, to overcome a repugnance which destroyed his peace of mind, and separated him from the only being he could ever love? Must it not be acknowledged, that the sovereign will of the law is frequently subservient to the will of the parties to the marriage contract?

Paroxysms of despondency succeeded paroxysms of anger; and a dark and impenetrable cloud lowered over his whole future life. He feared that the hopeless sorrow in which he was plunged, would encourage the attacks of his relentless enemy.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, with a pang of despondency and remorse; "alas! it is my own fault! I, alone, am responsible! Poor, unhappy woman! I most cruelly deceived her. She ought to hate me! and yet, but a moment since,

she manifested the most touching interest in my welfare. But, instead of being satisfied with her assurances of affection, I must, with all the selfishness and folly of passion, speak to her of love; and hardly had my lips touched her hand, when she shrunk from me in fear and loathing. If, in the extreme of incredulity, I could yet doubt the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, the disclosure she made to the prince would have dissipated the illusion! What right had she to intrust him with the frightful secret? Was it not base and treacherous? What right? Alas! the same right which the victim has to complain of its destroyer. Poor child! so young, so loving! The severest reproach which she could utter against the misery to which I had condemned her, was, that such was not the fate of which she had dreamed; and that she was very young to be compelled to relinquish love. I know that Clémence will sacredly observe the promise which she has made; she will prove herself, henceforth, the most affectionate of sisters. Is not my situation to be envied? She might have continued to treat me with the greatest contempt and indifference, and I should not have been able to open my lips in complaint. But now, the cold and strange intercourse which subsisted between us, is to be exchanged for the most affectionate and kindly relations. Well, well, I must console myself with what she condescends to grant. Shall I not be too fortunate, too much blessed? How weak, how cowardly I am! Is she not my wife?—mine by every sanction, human and divine? Does not the law give me custody of her person? Have I not the right to ——" He interrupted himself with a burst of sardonic laughter. "Oh! yes, yes! I had better add violence to my other infamy! But what resource remains? I love her—I love her to distraction! and can love no being but her. I desire that she should reciprocate my own feelings, and not speak of her sisterly regard. She must have compassion when her generous nature discovers how wretched I am. No; never, never! It is not in the nature of the female heart to overcome disgust. My frightful malady inspires her with horror—and will for ever! for ever! Do you hear that?" exclaimed the wretched man, wild with anguish.

After a moment of gloomy meditation, he continued: "That anonymous letter came from an enemy's hand; and I was guilty of the injustice of suspecting the prince of cool, premeditated treachery, and of including my wife in the infamous suspicion. Jealousy is incurable, and yet I must not be abused. If the prince, who loves me as the most sincere and generous friend can love, promises to Clémence advice and support, and attempts to preoccupy her mind with benevolent enterprises, it must be because her heart needs protection against some other passion. So young, so beautiful, so admired, with no love to insure her fidelity, and with wrongs which might palliate her conduct, can I have implicit confidence in her purity? Another torture! How much I suffered when I believed her guilty! it was an idle fear. Clémence has sworn that she will not fail in any duty, and she will faithfully keep her promise—but at what a price! When she just now lavished affectionate words upon me, how her sad and resigned smile tortured me! How that return to her destroyer must have afflicted her! Her kind and patient resignation inspired me with the most excruciating remorse; for, until then, she had revenged herself with haughty reproaches. Wretch! wretch that I am!"

* * *

After a sleepless night, disturbed by these bitter reflections, the agitation of the Marquis d'Harville ceased as if by enchantment. He waited with anxiety for the dawn of day.

Quite early in the morning, the Marquis d'Harville rang for his valet. The moment old Joseph entered his master's room, he heard him, to his great surprise, humming over a hunting song—a certain sign of good-humour.

"What a fine voice you have, my lord!" said the old servant, moved by this indication of reviving happiness; "what a pity it is that you do not more frequently use it."

"Have I a fine voice, Joseph?" said the marquis, laughing.

"Should my lord's voice be as hoarse as a screech-owl's, 'twould still be fine to me."

"Hold your tongue, old flatterer!"

"Well, my lord, when you sing, it is a sign that you are happy; and for that reason your voice seems to me the most delightful music in the world."

"If that is the case, old Joseph, you must prepare yourself, and open your long ears."

"What do you mean, my lord?"

"You will now enjoy daily the charming music of which you seem to be so fond."

"Do you intend to be cheerful every day?" said the old servant, clapping his hands with delight.

"Yes, every day, my old Joseph. No more sorrow, no more sadness: I can give that assurance to you, who are aware of all my troubles. I am filled with happiness. My wife is an angel of goodness. She has entreated my pardon for her past indifference, attributing her conduct—would you suspect it?—to jealousy."

"To jealousy!"

"Yes; absurd suspicions, created by anonymous letters."

"How infamous to write them!"

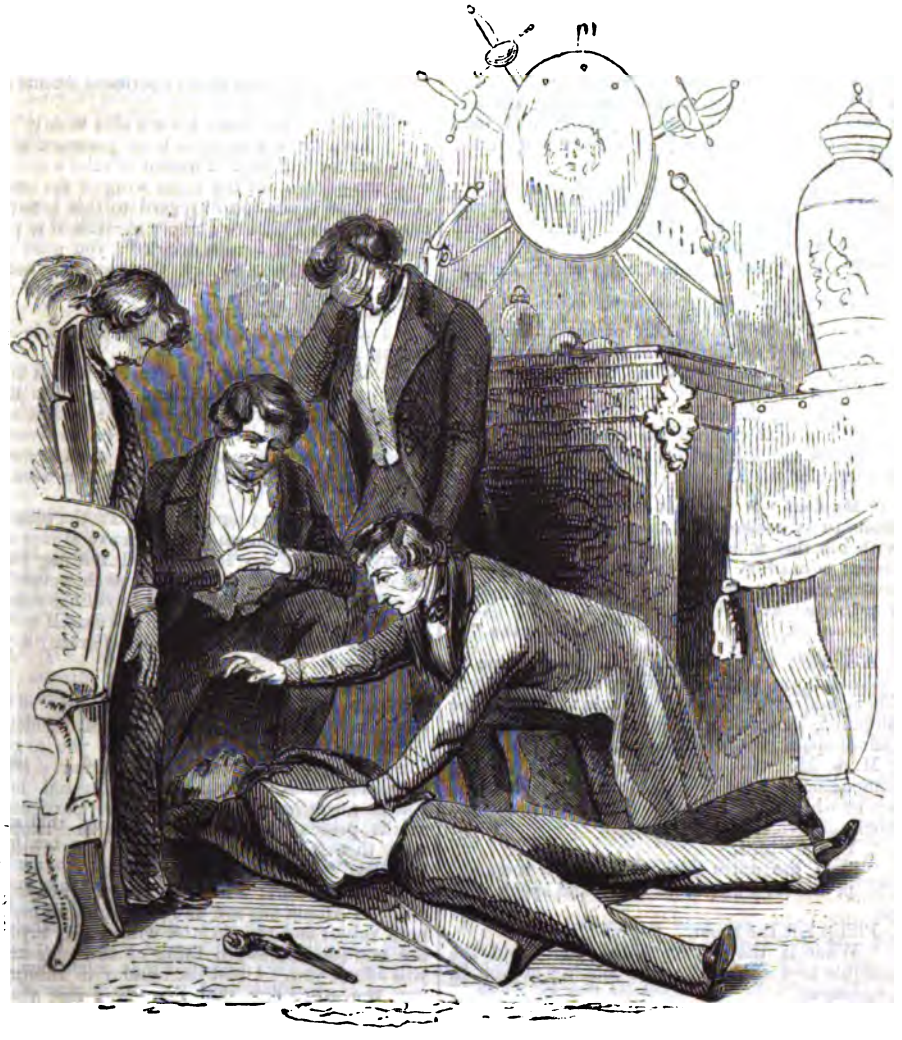
"Women have so much self-love, that such suspicions were sufficient to alienate her from me; but last evening she imparted to me the cause of her coldness, and I relieved her suspicions. I cannot express to you my delight. She loves me! she loves me! She told me, that the distance which she felt herself compelled to assume was insupportable; so that our difficulties are all harmonized, and you can judge of my happiness."

"Is it possible, my lord?" exclaimed Joseph, his eyes filling with tears. "You will now be always happy, my lord, since the love of the marquise was all that you needed, or rather, her want of affection was the cause of your melancholy, as you have frequently told me."

"And to what other person should I have disclosed it? Did not you alone possess my afflicting secret? But let us not speak of sorrow—the day is too beautiful. You perceive, perhaps, that I have shed tears: the reason is, that my happiness has overpowered me—'twas so unexpected. How foolish I am! Is it not so?"

"No, no, my lord! you are entitled to weep from happiness, you have wept so much from grief—and do I not also weep? Charming tears! I would not exchange them for ten years of my life. I have but one fear, and that is, that I shall not be able to refrain from throwing myself at the feet of the marquise the first time I see her."

"You are as foolish as your master, old idiot; I have also fears for myself."



[The Death of the Marquis d'Harville.]

"What are they?"

"It is that this joy cannot last — I am too happy. What now do I need?"

"Nothing, nothing, my lord."

"That is the very reason I am troubled with forebodings; my happiness is so complete."

"I have other fears, my lord, but I dare not entertain them."

"I understand you; but do not give way to them: the change produced by my happiness is so great, that I am now confident of being saved."

"How so?"

"Has not my physician often assured me, that a violent mental shock had frequently cured this awful malady? Why should not sudden happiness produce the same effect?"

"If you believe this, my lord, it will be so. It is so—you are cured! What a blessed day has dawned upon us! My lady, the marquise, is indeed a good angel descended from heaven. I begin myself to fear that it is too much felicity for one day. But, now I think of it, a little trouble only is needed; and, fortunately, I have it for you."

"What is it?"

"One of your friends has, luckily, at the present moment, received a slight sword thrust. It is not a very serious wound, it is true; but it will be sufficient to trouble you, and there will be a small dark spot upon this happy day. It would have been better if the wound was more dangerous; but we must be contented with what we have."

"Hold your peace. To whom do you allude?"

"The Duke de Lucenay."

"Is he wounded?"

"A scratch upon the arm. The duke called to see my lord, and said he would come this morning and take a cup of coffee with you."

"Poor De Lucenay! Why did you not inform me?"

"I was unable to do it last evening, my lord."

After a moment's thought, the marquis said: "You are right, Joseph; this slight misfortune may appease an envious destiny. But I have an idea of giving this morning a bachelors' breakfast, and invite none but the friends of the Duke de Lucenay, to congratulate him upon the fortunate result of the duel. As it will take him entirely by surprise, he will be very much delighted."

"Excellent, my lord!—let us have a glorious holiday. You must make up for all the time you have lost. How many covers, my lord? I wish to give orders to the cook."

"For six persons, in the small winter dining-room."

"And the invitations?"

"I will write them. One of the grooms can mount a horse and distribute them immediately; it is yet early, and every one of the guests will be at home. Ring the bell."

Joseph rang the bell.

The marquis entered his cabinet, and wrote the following notes, with no other direction than the name of the invited:—

"My dear * * *,—This is a circular—an impromptu is designed. Lucenay is to breakfast with me this morning, and expects to find me alone: cause him the very agreeable surprise by joining me and a few other friends, whom I have also invited, at twelve precisely.

"A. D'HARVILLE."

A servant now entered. "Tell some one to mount a horse, and deliver these notes instantly." Then, addressing Joseph, he said: "Write the direction Viscount de Saint-Remy"—'Lucenay cannot spare him,' said the marquis to himself—"M. de Monville, one of the duke's travelling companions; Lord Douglas, his invariable partner at whist; the Baron de Sezannes, his friend from youth. Have you written?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Send the notes without losing a moment. Philip, ask M. Doublet to come and speak with me."

Philip left the room.

"What is the matter with you?" said the marquis to Joseph, who was looking at him in amazement.

"I am at a loss what to think of it; I never saw you in such excellent humour, and although you are generally pale, you have now a fine colour—your eyes sparkle."

"With happiness! with happiness! my old Joseph. You must aid me in a plot: you will go and inquire of Mademoiselle Juliette, who is maid of the marquise, and has charge of her diamonds, I believe ——"

"Yes, my lord; Mademoiselle Juliette has charge of them. I assisted her, a week ago, in cleaning them."

"You will ask her the name and direction of her mistress's jeweller; but let her not say a word about it to the marquise."

"I understand you, my lord; you intend a surprise."

"Be in a hurry; for here comes M. Doublet."

The steward entered the room the moment that Joseph left it.

"I have the honour to wait for my lord's orders."

"My dear M. Doublet, I am about to overwhelm you with amazement," said the marquis, laughing. "I shall draw from you a cry of distress."

"From me, my lord?"

"Yes, from you."

"I will do all in my power to give my lord satisfaction."

"I am going to spend an enormous amount of money, M. Doublet."

"No matter for that: we are able to do it."

"I have for a long time been possessed with a project for building. I intend to raise a gallery over the garden, on the right wing of the hôtel. After some hesitation in regard to this extravagance, which I believe I never mentioned to you before, I have at length decided; you must inform my architect to-day, that we may settle upon a plan. Well, M. Doublet, do you not lament the expenditure?"

"I can affirm to you, my lord, that I do not lament it."

"I design the gallery for fêtes. I wish it to be built as by enchantment; and you know that enchantment always costs money: and it will be necessary to dispose of fifteen or twenty thousand francs of our capital, to meet the outlay. I wish the work commenced as soon as possible."

"It is perfectly proper, my lord; the pleasure can be enjoyed immediately. I have always said to myself, that my lord needed nothing but a passion for something. That of architecture has an advantage over all others, for buildings remain. As for money, my lord need give himself no uneasiness, we are fortunately able to gratify any of our tastes."

Joseph returned.

"Here, sir, is the address," said he, "of the marquise's jeweller. His name is M. Baudoin."

"My dear M. Doublet, I beg of you to go to this jeweller, and order him to bring a set of diamonds, worth about two thousand louis. Ladies never have too many jewels; particularly at the present day, when dresses are trimmed with them. You will settle the bill with the jeweller."

"Yes, my lord: I have no scruples about this outlay. Diamonds are like buildings, of permanent value; and the surprise will gratify my lady the marquise, to say nothing of the pleasure it will afford you. I had the honour of informing you, the other day, that there was not a more fortunate being in the world than the Marquis d'Harville."

"My dear M. Doublet, your congratulations are always seasonable."

"That is their only merit, my lord, and that they do possess, for they come from the bottom of my heart. I will go to the jeweller's," said M. Doublet, leaving the room.

The moment the marquis was left alone, he paced the room, with his eyes fixed and meditative. His countenance changed suddenly; it no longer betokened the contentment of mind by which the old valet and the steward had been deceived, but a calm, mournful, determined resolution. After walking some minutes, he seated himself heavily, as if overcome by the oppressive sorrow of his heart, and resting his elbows upon the table, buried his face in his hands. In an instant, however, he raised his head impulsively, wiped a tear from his inflamed and moistened eyelids, and said, with apparent effort: "Well! courage, courage!"

He now wrote to several people upon subjects

of no particular consequence; but, in these letters, made or postponed appointments for a few days to come. The marquis was finishing his correspondence, when Joseph entered in such a cheerful humour, so forgetful of propriety, as to be humming an air.

"You have a very fine voice, M. Joseph," said his master, smiling.

"I have no pretensions to voice, my lord; but I sung so loud within my heart, that it is heard without."

"You will send these letters to the post-office."

"Yes, my lord; but where do you intend receiving the gentlemen this morning?"

"Here, in my cabinet; for, as they will smoke after breakfast, the odour of the tobacco will not then reach the apartments of the marquise."

At this moment, a carriage was heard in the courtyard of the hotel.

"It is my lady the marquise, who is going out: she ordered her horses very early this morning," said Joseph.

"Hasten, and ask her to see me before she goes."

"Yes, my lord."

Hardly had the servant departed, when the marquis approached a glass to examine his countenance attentively. "Well, well," said he, in a gloomy voice, "it will do; my cheeks flush, my eyes sparkle, whether with joy or fever, it is no matter, provided they are deceived. Now to deck my lip with a smile—there are many sorts of smile—but who can distinguish the false from the true? Who can penetrate this hypocritical mask? Who would venture to say this smile hides despair? That noisy gaiety conceals thoughts of death? Who could divine that? No one; fortunately, no one! I am mistaken; love could not be deceived: its instincts would enlighten it. But I hear the footstep of my wife! my wife!! Come, to your part—your part, unlucky buffoon!"

Clémence entered the cabinet of the marquis. "Good morning, Albert, my good brother," said she, in a tone of thrilling kindness, extending to him her hand; and observing the animated expression of his countenance, added: "What has given you such an expression of joy?"

"At the time you entered, my dear little sister, I was thinking about you; and I was under the influence of an excellent resolution."

"I am not surprised."

"The events of last evening, your admirable generosity, the noble conduct of the prince, have supplied me with materials for reflection; and I have become a convert to your views. Yes, entirely so. You would not have excused me yesterday, Clémence, for an easy surrender of your love, without a struggle."

"What language! what an auspicious change!" exclaimed the marquise. "I was confident, that in addressing your heart, and your reason, you would understand me. I have now no doubts for the future."

"Neither have I, Clémence, I assure you. Since my resolution of last night, the future, which before seemed to me vague and uncertain, has become wonderfully transparent."

"Nothing can be more natural, my dear friend. We now advance towards the same object, supported fraternally by each other's arm; and at the end of our career, we shall find ourselves unchanged. That sentiment will be unalterable. In short, I desire that you should be happy; and in order that you may be so, I have placed it here," said Clémence, smiling, and putting her finger to her forehead, "or rather here," she added, with a charming expression of countenance, lowering her hand to her heart. "It is here that the kindest thoughts shall ever watch over you; and you will learn, my brother, something of the constancy of a devoted heart."

"Dear Clémence!" said the marquis, with suppressed emotion. After a silence of a moment, he continued in a gay and lively tone: "I sent for you in order to inform you, that I could not take tea with you this morning. I am expecting several friends to breakfast with me. I have started a sort of impromptu, to congratulate poor De Lucenay upon the fortunate result of his duel, although he was but slightly wounded by his adversary!"

The marquise blushed, as she thought of the ridiculous cause of this duel; and she was reminded by it, of an error of her own, of which she was heartily ashamed. To avoid unpleasant recollections, she said to her husband: "By a very singular coincidence, I am myself going to take tea, uninvited, with the Duchess de Lucenay, for I have many things to say to her, respecting my two unknown *protegés*. From there, I intend to go to Saint-Lazare with Madame de Blinval. You are not aware of half my projects. I am now intriguing to be admitted a member of the Society for the Protection of Young Prisoners."

"Your new passion is certainly insatiable," said the marquis, smiling. He then added, with an emotion which, in spite of his efforts, was very perceptible: "I shall then see you no more —— to-day," he hastened to add.

"And you are displeased at my early departure?" said Clémence, quickly, struck with the tone of his voice. "If you desire it, I will postpone my visit to the duchess."

The marquis had almost betrayed himself, and he answered, in a most affectionate tone: "I am as much displeased to see you go out, my dear little sister, as I shall be pleased to see you return. I shall never cure myself of that fault."

"I should be grieved to have you amend it, my friend."

A rap, announcing a visit, was now heard. "Some of your guests are probably coming," said the marquise. "I will now leave you. But what do you intend to do this evening? I should be pleased with your company to the Italian Opera—perhaps the music will now be more agreeable to you."

"I shall be at your disposal with the greatest pleasure."

"Will you go out this afternoon, or shall I see you before dinner?"

"I shall not go out: you will find me here."

"When I return, I will come and learn from you the adventures of the bachelors' breakfast."

"Adieu, Clémence."

"Adieu, my friend, until this afternoon. I leave a clear field to you; I wish you all sorts of pleasure. Be very gay."

And cordially pressing her husband's hand, the marquise left through one door, a moment before the Duke de Lucenay entered from another.

"She wishes me all sorts of pleasure, she desires me to be gay; to the word 'adieu!' drawn from the depths of my agonised soul—to that word of final separation, she responded by a 'soon, very soon;' and she leaves me tranquilly, with a smile upon her lips. It certainly does

great honour to my histrionic powers: I did not know that I was such an excellent actor. But here comes De Lucenay."

CHAPTER XIV.

BACHELORS' BREAKFAST.

The Duke de Lucenay now entered. His wound was so slight that he did not even wear his arm in a sling; his countenance was, as ever, haughty and ironical, the agitation of his limbs incessant, and his disposition to tease invincible. In spite of his awkwardness and solecisms of manner, and the extraordinary length of his nose, the duke was relieved from vulgarity by a sort of natural dignity, and an air of dauntless impudence.

"You must think me very indifferent to what concerns you, my dear Henry," said the marquis, giving his hand to the duke; "but it was only this morning that I heard of your unpleasant adventure."

"Unpleasant! Nonsense, marquis; I got the worth of my money, as they say. I never laughed so much in my life: the excellent M. Robert had such a serious and determined air to wipe off the imputation of having phlegm. You do not know, I presume, that the sole cause of the duel was my asking him the other night, at the ball of the Ambassador of * * *, in presence of your wife and the Countess Macgregor, how he got rid of his phlegm. Hence his wrath; for, between us, he did not suffer from that inconvenience. But never mind; he was vexed to hear it in the presence of pretty women."

"What folly! you never will reform. But who is this M. Robert?"

"Upon my word, I know nothing of him. It is the same gentleman I met at the Springs. He was passing before us in the winter-garden of the ambassadress, and I addressed to him this silly joke. He replied to it by giving me, within two days, in a most gallant manner, a thrust with his sword: that is the whole of the adventure. But let us speak no more of this nonsense. I came to ask you for a cup of tea;" and, having thus spoken, the duke sprawled himself upon the sofa, and inserting his cane between the wall and a picture which hung over his head, commenced shaking and swinging it to and fro, like a pendulum.

"I was waiting for you, my dear duke, when you arrived. I have prepared a surprise for you."

"Well! what is it?" exclaimed the duke, giving the picture a more violent motion.

"You will unhook the picture, and let it down upon your head."

"That is true—you have an eagle eye. But what surprise have you prepared? what is it?"

"I have asked several of your friends to meet us at breakfast."

"Indeed, marquis! Bravo! bravissimo! archi-bravissimo!" exclaimed the duke, thumping with his cane the pillows of the sofa; "and who have you asked? Saint-Remy? Oh! no, no; he has gone into the country for a few days. What the devil can have sent him into the country in the middle of winter!"

"Are you sure he is not in Paris?"

"Very sure. I wrote to him, to ask his services as my second; but he was absent, and I had to ask Lord Douglas and Sezannes."

"It is fortunate that I invited them to breakfast."

"Bravo! bravo!" said the duke, twisting and turning on the sofa, and accompanying his evolutions with hard knocks with his cane. The mystic movements of the duke were interrupted by the arrival of the Viscount de Saint-Remy.

"There is no necessity of my inquiring whether the Duke de Lucenay is here: I heard him down stairs," said the viscount, gaily.

"Hallo! is that you, romantic Sylvian, rustic, ware-wolf?" exclaimed the duke in astonishment, and rising abruptly: "I thought you had gone into the country?"

"I returned yesterday. I received this morning the invitation of the marquis, and anticipating a joyful surprise, hastened here," said the viscount, giving his hand to the duke and the marquis.

"I am obliged to you for your promptness, my dear Saint-Remy. It is quite natural that the friend of the duke should hasten to congratulate him upon his safety."

"But what the devil have you been doing in the country in mid-winter? That is what surprises me," said the pertinacious duke.

"Oh, I went there to wean myself, by degrees, from Paris, since I am so shortly to leave it."

"That's an excellent idea of yours, getting attached to the Gerolstein embassy. You never can be allowed to go there, my wife says, and everybody repeats the same."

"I assure you, that the duchess, as well as 'everybody,' is mistaken."

"She told you in my presence, that it was folly."

"I am used to them."

"To elegant and charming follies? I know that you are. I admit, that you are deceiving yourself, by apeing the magnificence of a Sardanapalus; but to go and bury yourself in such a hole as the court of Gerolstein is not a folly, but a stupidity."

"Beware, my dear De Lucenay. If you speak contemptuously of that German court, you will raise a quarrel with the marquis, who is an intimate friend of the reigning grand duke. By the way, his highness received me with the most extraordinary grace at the ball of the Ambassadress of * * *, where I was presented to him."

"Indeed, my dear Henry, if you knew the grand duke as I know him, you would readily perceive why the viscount should have no repugnance to passing a few months at Gerolstein."

"I believe you, marquis. I have heard that the grand duke is quite an original; but after all, a beau like Saint-Remy, the flower of the pea-blossom, cannot live anywhere but in Paris. He never would be fully appreciated in any other place but this."

The other guests had just arrived, when Joseph entered, and said a few words in a low tone to his master.

"Gentlemen, you must excuse me," said the marquis. "The jeweller of my wife has brought me some diamonds to select for her. I wish to surprise her. You know that myself and Lucenay are of the old school."

"By the way, speaking of surprise, my wife gave me one yesterday, and a famous one too."

"Did she make you a splendid present?"

"She asked me for a hundred thousand francs."

"And, as you are a generous husband, you ——"

"Lent her that amount, taking a mortgage on her estate at Arnouville. Good accounts, you

know, make good friends; but at all events, to lend one hundred thousand francs at two hours' notice to a friend, is as generous as it is rare. Was it not glorious, Saint-Remy? for you are an adept at a loan," said the duke, laughing, unsuspecting the cutting nature of the thrust.

In spite of his brazen front, the viscount blushed slightly, but recovered his composure sufficiently to say: "One hundred thousand francs! How can a woman contrive to spend one hundred thousand francs? With a man it is entirely a different thing."

"Upon my soul, I do not know, and what is better, do not care; she probably wishes to pay for some dresses. She is doubtless dunned by some impatient and exacting creditors. It is her own look-out. It would have been exceeding bad taste, while making a loan, to ask the borrower what she intended to do with the money?"

"And yet, usurers are frequently curious to know to what purpose their funds are to be applied," said the viscount, laughing.

"Saint-Remy, as you are a man of unimpeachable taste, you must aid me in selecting these jewels which I design for my wife. Your approbation will consecrate my choice. Your decision is final on all questions of style."

The jeweller entered, bringing several cases of diamonds in a leather bag.

"Hallo! M. Baudoin, upon my word!" said the duke.

"At your service, my lord duke."

"I am sure it is you who are ruining my wife, with your infernal and dazzling temptations," said the duke.

"My lady duchess was desirous of having her jewels reset this winter," said the jeweller, with a slight embarrassment; "and just before I came here, I took them to the duchess."

The Viscount de Saint-Remy was well aware that the duchess, in order to come to his aid, had been obliged to change her diamonds for false stones; and as he was rather annoyed by the turn the conversation was taking, he remarked boldly: "How curious and inquisitive husbands are becoming! I would not answer him, M. Baudoin."

"Curious! you are greatly mistaken. My wife must pay her own expenses; she is richer than I am."

During the conversation, M. Baudoin had displayed upon the table several splendid necklaces of diamonds and rubies.

"What magnificent stones, and how exquisitely cut!" said Lord Douglas.

"Alas! sir," said the jeweller, "I employed upon this work, one of the best lapidaries in Paris; but he has suddenly become deranged, and I shall be unable to find his equal. My brokeress told me that poverty was probably the cause of his delirium."

"Poverty! and do you confide diamonds to people so wretchedly destitute?"

"Certainly, sir; and no one ever heard of a lapidary that was a thief, although the trade is a very laborious one, and exceedingly unprofitable."

"How much is this necklace worth?" asked the marquis.

"My lord marquis will observe, that all the stones are of the purest water, and uniformly cut."

"This manifesto threatens a very serious attack upon your purse," said the viscount, laughing.

"You may expect, my dear d'Harville, an exorbitant demand."

"I do not wish to oblige my lord the marquis to chaffer with me; the very lowest price is forty-two thousand francs."

"Gentlemen, let us yield our silent admiration to the marquis; a surprise that costs forty-two thousand francs! but I beg of you not to make it public; it would be an odious precedent."

"Laugh as much as you please, gentlemen," said the marquis, gaily; "I am fond of my wife, and far from wishing to conceal it, I am desirous of boasting of it."

"We are perfectly convinced of it," said the viscount; "a present like this speaks louder than all the protestations in the world."

"I will select this necklace, if this black enamel setting appears to you in good taste, Saint-Remy?"

"It adds much to the brilliancy of the stones; I think the arrangement beautiful."

"I decide upon this necklace: you will settle with my steward, M. Doublet," said the marquis to the jeweller.

"M. Doublet has already informed me, my lord," said M. Baudoin, returning the different sets of diamonds which he had displayed with the most perfect confidence into his bag, without counting the stones which the Viscount de Saint-Remy had examined and handled with marked curiosity, during the interview.

The Marquis d'Harville, on giving the necklace into Joseph's hands, said to him in a low tone: "Let Mademoiselle Juliette adroitly place these diamonds among the other jewellery of her mistress, in such a manner that her suspicions may not be awakened, in order that the surprise may be more complete."

At this moment, the principal servant announced that breakfast was ready, and the guests of the marquis passed into the dining-room, and seated themselves at the table.

"Do you know, my dear marquis," said the duke, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is convenient enough," said the marquis, "but it needs more room; I think of adding to it a gallery over the garden. The marquise intends to give some grand entertainments, and our three saloons are not large enough; besides, there is nothing so inconvenient as to be exiled by a fête from some apartment which you habitually occupy."

"I am of the same opinion, marquis," said the viscount. "Nothing is so vulgar as these forced retreats, which are ordered under the authority of some ball or concert. To give an entertainment in elegant style, without incommoding yourself, one should devote exclusively to it, a suite of apartments; and, moreover, a large and splendid saloon designed for a ball, should have decorations different from an ordinary room; the same contrast should exist between the style of the two apartments, as there is between monumental fresco and canvas painting."

"He is right: what a calamity it is, that Saint-Remy has not an income of twelve or fifteen hundred thousand francs! how he would astonish mankind by his magnificent and splendid designs!"

"Since we are blessed with a representative government," said the duke, "should not the country vote one million a year to Saint-Remy, and charge him with the task of exhibiting in

Paris, the taste and elegance of the French nation; and thus, France would become the arbiter of elegance and the fine arts to Europe and the world?"

"It is carried," said the company, in chorus.

"And the million should be raised annually by a tax upon those contemptible misers, who, having immense estates, should be tried and convicted of living like stingy dogs," added the duke.

"And thus sentenced to defray the expense of that magnificence which it is their duty to display," added the marquis.

"The functions of high priest, or rather grand master of elegance, devolving on Saint-Remy, would also have a tendency to elevate the standard of general taste."

"He would himself be a model which every one would aspire to resemble."

"That is plain."

"And this effort to imitate him would render the taste purer."

"At the era of the Renaissance, taste became universally excellent, because it was modelled upon the exquisite elegance of the aristocrats of that period."

"By the grave turn which the conversation has taken, I see that it will be necessary to present a petition to the Chamber, to institute an office of grand master of French Elegance."

"And as the deputies are desirous of being regarded as supreme upon all æsthetical questions, I presume the bill would be carried by acclamation."

"While waiting for a decision which will legalize the authority which Saint-Remy now exercises in fact, I will consult your opinions respecting the gallery which I am proposing to erect."

"My feeble light is at your disposal, d'Harville."

"And when shall the splendid temple be consecrated?"

"Next year, I presume; for I shall order the work to be commenced immediately."

"You seem to be perfectly possessed with projects."

"I have many others. I design a complete metamorphosis of Val-Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?"

"Yes. I will make it an admirable retreat, if God allows me to live long enough."

"Poor old man!"

"But have you not extended your property in Burgundy recently, by the purchase of another farm?"

"Yes: 'twas a very good speculation which I made under the advice of my notary."

"Who is the rare and precious man, who gives you such excellent advice?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand."

A slight agitation traced its lines on the forehead of the Viscount de Saint-Remy, at the mention of that name.

"Is he really the honest man he is represented to be?" asked the viscount, negligently, of the Marquis d'Harville, who now called to mind the insinuations of Rodolph.

"What a question!" said the duke. "The probity of Jacques Ferrand is fairly antique."

"He is as much respected as he is respectable."

"Very pious withal; but that spoils nothing."

"His excessive avarice is a good security for his clients."

"He is one of those notaries of the old school, who ask you for what you mistake them, when you venture to speak of a receipt for money entrusted to their hands."

"For that reason alone, I would confide all my property to his hands."

"But where the devil did you pick up your doubts concerning this worthy man, Saint-Remy?"

"I am only the echo of vague reports: I have no reason for denying the integrity of this phœnix. But to return to your projects, d'Harville; what do you intend to build at Val-Richer? They say the château is admirable."

"You shall be consulted, I assure you, my dear Saint-Remy, and sooner perhaps than you imagine; for I anticipate much pleasure from improvements there. There seems to me nothing more agreeable, than to have in your mind a series of projects which will fill up the vacuity of years to come: now this plan, next year that, the year after the other. This delightful occupation of mind, united with a charming wife whom you adore, and who sympathises with all your designs, and I cannot conceive why life should not pass pleasantly enough."

"Just the thing: a perfect paradise upon earth!"

"Now, gentlemen," said the marquis, "if you wish to smoke a cigar, you will find some of excellent flavour in my cabinet."

The guests arose from the table, and retired to the cabinet of the marquis. The door of his sleeping apartment was open; the principal ornaments of which, as we have before said, were two sets of beautiful arms. The duke having lighted his cigar, followed the marquis into his chamber.

"You know I was always very fond of arms," said the marquis to him.

"Indeed, you have some magnificent guns, both of French and English manufacture. I do not know which to prefer. Douglas, come and see if these guns are not equal to first-rate Manton."

Lord Douglas, Saint-Remy, and the two other guests entered the chamber to examine the arms.

The marquis took up a duelling pistol, and cocking it, said in a laughing manner: "Here, gentlemen, is the universal panacea for spleen, ennui, or any other evil which flesh is heir to;" and he placed the weapon to his lips in a jesting manner.

"As for me," said Saint-Remy, "I prefer some other specific. This is good enough in desperate cases."

"Yes; and there is no other so quick and efficacious: whiff! and it is all over. 'Tis a wonderful solace!"

"Be careful, d'Harville; these pleasantries are not always safe; an explosion may occur accidentally," said the duke, as he saw the marquis place the pistol to his lips.

"Do you think, my dear fellow, I should play with it in this manner if it was loaded?"

"Certainly not; but it is always best to be on the safe side."

"This is the way to manage the affair, gentlemen: you delicately insert the barrel between your teeth, and then ——"

"There is no end to your folly, when you once commence, d'Harville," said the duke, shrugging his shoulders.

"One places his finger on the trigger," continued the marquis.

"What a child!"

"A slight movement of the muscle, and one is sent into the regions of the dead." At these words the pistol was discharged. The marquis d'Harville blew out his brains!

The power of language is feeble to portray the affright and horror of the astonished guests. The next day the following paragraph could be read in the public prints: "Yesterday, a fatal and most sudden casualty, created a great sensation in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. One of those imprudent acts, which yearly put an end to so many lives, caused this lamentable event. The facts below, we have gathered from the best sources, and the public may rely upon their authenticity. The Marquis d'Harville, a proprietor of an immense fortune, of about twenty-six years of age, and distinguished for the elevation of his character and the excellence of his heart, having been but a few years married to a wife he adored, had invited some of his friends to breakfast; on leaving the table, the guests passed into the sleeping apartment of the Marquis d'Harville, in which room there were several valuable arms. The marquis, in a joke, took one of the pistols, placed it to his lips, and was so perfectly confident it was not loaded, that he even pulled the trigger; the pistol was discharged, and the unfortunate young man fell dead, his head most shockingly shattered. Imagine the consternation of the Marquis d'Harville's friends, to whom a few moments before, full of life, happiness, and bright prospects, he had been imparting some of his projects for the future. In short, as if everything combined to render this casualty one of the most painful it was ever our duty to record, the very morning of this fatal event, the marquis, wishing to take his wife by surprise, had purchased a necklace of great value to present to her. At a time when life had never appeared more brilliant and promising, he fell a victim to this awful accident. It is useless to waste words in reflections upon such a mournful calamity. We can only remain in silent wonder at the inscrutable decrees of Providence."

We quote from the paper, in order to show that the public at large attributed the death of Clémence's husband to a fatal casualty resulting from his imprudence. The marquis carried with him to the grave, the secret of his voluntary death. Yes, voluntary, for it was premeditated with as much intrepidity as magnanimity; so that even his wife might not suspect the cause of his self-murder. The projects which the marquis had developed to his friends and steward, the happiness which he had confided to his valet, the surprise which he had prepared for his wife, were all false lures, held out to public credulity. Who could suppose that a man whose mind was so occupied with future projects, so solicitous to please his wife, could think of destroying himself? No other cause but an accidental one, could be assigned for his death.

His fatal resolution had been dictated by hopeless despair. The generous and frank forgiveness which his wife had granted for the great wrong inflicted upon her, her resolve to redeem her past indifference by devoting her life to alleviating his sufferings, had awakened in the heart of her husband the most distressing remorse. Her mournful resignation to a life without love, devoted to the relief of a man afflicted with an incurable disease; her solemn asseveration that she could never overcome her repugnance to him, had inspired the marquis with the tenderest compassion for his wife, the most terrible disgust for himself. In the exasperation of his pain, he said to himself: "I love, and can only love one woman in the world, and that woman is my wife; and her present disposition would augment my passion for her, if that were possible. She never can love me, she has the best right to despise and hate me; for by an infamous deceit, I have chained her to my own deplorable existence. What remains for me to do, but to deliver her from the odious bonds which cruelty and selfishness have imposed? My death alone can sever those ties. I must therefore die." These were the motives which led the marquis to that awful sacrifice.

If the defect to which we have alluded did not exist in the law, if a divorce could have been obtained, would the unfortunate man have laid violent hands upon himself? No! for he then could have partially remedied the grievous wrong which he had committed, could have restored his wife to freedom, and permitted her to find, in another marriage, the happiness which was destroyed in this. The immutable imperfections of the law, therefore, render certain errors remediless, or remediable only as the one we have contemplated by a new crime.

CHAPTER XV.

SAINT-LAZARE.

We think that we should inform the most fastidious of our readers, that the prison of Saint-Lazare, particularly devoted to female outcasts and thieves of the same sex, is daily visited by ladies, whose benevolent character and social position, command universal respect. Those who are accustomed to all the splendours of affluence—those who by their beauty and accomplishments are entitled to a place in the most distinguished circles, pass long hours with the prisoners of Saint-Lazare, watching their degraded souls for the first budding of rectitude, the first aspiration after truth, the first pang of remorse over their past crimes; to stimulate their upward tendency, to guide and direct their repentance, and by the eloquence with which they enforce lessons upon duty, honour, and virtue, to rescue from the abyss in which they are plunged, some at least of these abandoned, despised, and forsaken creatures. These courageous matrons, habituated to all the refinements of the most select and elevated society, pressing their lips upon the brows of their own daughters, innocent as angels in heaven, forsake the sphere, to which they are native, and plunge into the dark prisons to brave the coarseness, indecency, profanity, of these thieves and profligates. Faithful to their mission of exalted benevolence, they do not shrink from exposing themselves to this infectious atmosphere, to place their hands upon these degraded hearts, to discover if some slight and feeble beating encourages the hope of final salvation, and struggle to tear the contaminated soul from almost inevitable perdition. The modest and shrinking readers to whom we address ourselves, can quiet their fears and their susceptibility, by the assurance that they will see and hear nothing but what is daily presented to these most virtuous and exemplary missionaries. Without presuming to draw a parallel between their efforts and our own, we are somewhat sustained in our difficult and painful undertaking, by the conviction of having awakened some noble sympathy for undeserved misfortune,

for sincere repentance, for artless honesty; and having inspired disgust, horror, and salutary fear, for all that is positively vicious and impure: we have not shrunk from presenting pictures, faithful though hideous, of human nature as it exists, under the conviction that their moral truth will have, like the fire, sufficient power to purify anything that may be regarded as offensive in these delineations of depravity. Our words have too little weight, and our opinions too little authority, for us to aspire to the functions of a moral teacher. We attempt only to call the attention of earnest and thoughtful minds to great social evils, the existence of which may be deplored, but cannot be denied.

Many persons, fortunate in the good things of this world, and of valetudinarian delicacy of mind, shocked at this exposure of evils which exist, have raised the cry that these delineations are exaggerated, improbable, and unnatural, in order that too strong claims for compassion might not be presented to their sensitive souls.

The result is a very natural one. The selfish man, who is rich and well fed, desires, before everything else in the world, quiet and undisturbed digestion; the presence of the poor, shivering with cold and hunger, destroys the tranquillity essential to this process; he prefers to enjoy his wealth and good dinners, with eyes which are half-closed by repletion, dwelling upon the voluptuous visions of the ballet or the opera.

We are happy, however, that all of the wealthy and elevated classes are not gifted with such sublimated delicacy; many of those, fortunate in the possession of riches, have expressed their gratitude to us, for disclosing new channels in which their charity might flow, and we have been powerfully sustained and comforted by the approbation of such minds.

We readily admit that the present work is somewhat of a questionable character. If, in its ephemeral career, it shall accomplish any of the objects to which we have just alluded, we shall feel proud and honoured in being its author. What more glorious reward can we reap than the benedictions of some poor family, indebted for some degree of comfort and happiness, to the views which we have presented to the public?

We have made these preliminary observations, to quiet the scruples of the fastidious reader. We will now introduce him into Saint-Lazare, an immense building, with a gloomy and imposing exterior, situated in the Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis.

In ignorance of the terrible drama which was in progress of development in her own mansion, the Marquise d'Harville had gone to this prison, after having obtained some information from the Duchess de Lucenay, concerning the two unfortunate females whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand plunged into absolute want. As Madame de Blinval, one of the patronesses of the Society for the Melioration of Young Prisoners, was unable to accompany Clémence, she had gone to Saint-Lazare alone. She was received politely by the director and several lady inspectors, designated by a black dress and blue ribbon, and a silver medal which they wore. One of these ladies, of advanced age and a grave and prepossessing countenance, remained alone with the marquise, in a small parlour adjoining the office.

It is impossible to imagine all the devotion, intelligence, compassion, and sagacity, unknown to the world, which exist among those reputable females who devote their lives to the humble and obscure task of acting as overseers to prisoners. They must be, by turns, indulgent and firm, mild and severe, but always indulgent and impartial. By constant intercourse with those committed to their management, they succeed, after long practice and experience, in obtaining such a perfect knowledge of the physiognomy of these females, that they can form an opinion of their character at a glance, and are able to classify them according to their degree of depravity.

Madame Armand, the matron left alone with the marquise, possessed, to a peculiar degree, this remarkable insight; and her judgments upon all questions of character were relied upon with great confidence in the establishment.

Madame Armand said to Clémence: "Since my lady the marquise has desired me to point out those of our inmates who, by their improvement or sincere repentance are entitled to her interest, I can recommend to her an unfortunate girl, whom I believe more unhappy than culpable. You may rely upon my assurance, that it is not too late to save this young child, who cannot be more than sixteen or seventeen years of age."

"And what has she done to deserve imprisonment?"

"She was arrested upon the Champs Elysees, in the evening; for it is forbidden, under severe penalties, to females of her character, to resort, either by day or night, to certain public places; and as the Champs Elysees is one of the prohibited promenades, she was arrested."

"And does she appear to you worthy of commiseration?"

"I have never seen features more artless or more beautiful. Imagine, my lady marquise, the face of the Virgin. What gave to her a still more modest appearance was, that when she was arrested, she was dressed like a peasant girl in the environs of Paris."

"Is she a country girl?"

"No, my lady. The inspectors have identified her as one who lived in a depraved house in the City, from which she has now been absent for two or three months; but as she did not request to have her name erased from the registry of the police, she remained subject to the control of the authorities, who sent her here."

"But perhaps she left Paris for the purpose of reinstating herself."

"That is my own opinion, madame, and was the cause of my becoming immediately interested in her. I have questioned her about the past; I asked her if she came from the country, with the hope that she had formed the determination to emancipate herself."

"What did she reply?"

"Lifting to my face her large blue, melancholy eyes, which were filled with tears, she said, in an accent of angelic sweetness: 'I thank you, madame, for your kindness, but I cannot disclose to you anything of my past history. I have been arrested for doing what was wrong; I do not complain.' 'But whence came you? Where have you been since you left the City? If you retired to the country with the intention of leading a different life, inform me of it: give me proof, and I will write to the prefect to obtain your liberty; your name shall be erased from the register, and your good resolutions encouraged.' 'I beg of you, madame, to ask me no questions, for I cannot answer them.' 'But,

when you leave this place, do you intend to return to that awful house?' 'Never!' she answered. 'What do you then intend to do?' 'God only knows,' she said, suffering her head to fall upon her breast."

"Her conduct is very singular. How does she express herself?"

"In excellent language. Her deportment is respectful, timid, and without vulgarity. I will say more: in spite of the extreme mildness of her voice and appearance, there is occasionally in her accent and her attitude, a kind of melancholy pride which surprises me. If these suspicions did not rest upon her fame, I should say this pride betrayed a soul which was conscious of its own elevation."

CHAPTER XVI.

MONT SAINT-JEAN.

The clock of Saint-Lazare was striking two. To the cold which had prevailed for a few days, a mild and spring-like day had succeeded. The rays of the sun were reflected from a large stone fountain, situated in the middle of the court-yard. The plot was planted with trees, and inclosed with walls, which were pierced by numerous grated windows. Wooden benches were placed here and there in this paved inclosure—the ordinary promenade of the inmates of the prison. The ringing of the bell announced that the hour of recreation had arrived, and the prisoners rushed tumultuously into the court-yard, through a grated door which was opened to them. The prisoners were uniformly dressed in a black cap, long gowns of a blue woollen, fastened round the waist by a belt with an iron buckle. There were two hundred of these outcasts confined in this prison, for violations of those particular rules and police regulations, which govern them, to the exclusion of the common law. At the first sight there was nothing very marked in their countenance, but upon a more attentive observation, the ineffaceable lines of vice and degradation could be distinctly traced. At the sight of this vast assemblage of lost creatures, the mind of the beholder could not but revert, with melancholy interest, to the period when some of them at least were virtuous and pure. We say some, for, unfortunately, the great majority of these outcasts were vitiated, not only from their youth, but from their infancy—even from their birth. The question is asked, with painful anxiety, what are the fatal causes of this wholesale ruin of body and soul? A thousand causes combine in producing this lamentable effect. It is less frequently the result of vicious inclination, than of a bad example, neglected education, and abandonment in childhood; but the grand parent cause of all this wretchedness and infamy, is poverty.

When the prisoners rushed, hallooing and screaming, into the yard, it was easy to perceive that it was not the joy of release from employment that rendered them so boisterous. After the first sally from the gate which led into the yard, the crowd separated, and formed a circle around a deformed creature whom they loaded with hisses and groans.

This being was a small woman of thirty-six or forty years of age, short, thick and shapeless, with her neck sunk between her shoulders. The cap had been torn from her head, and her long and tangled locks of sandy hair fell over her low and beast-like forehead. She wore the uniform of blue, and carried under her right arm a bundle, wrapped in an old and torn handkerchief. She attempted with her left arm to parry the blows which were aimed at her.

Nothing could be more grotesque and pitiable than the countenance of this woman; it was a face ridiculous, and, at the same time, hideous; it projected more like a snout than a visage, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, pierced with two nostrils; and two small, squinting, and bloodshot eyes danced about in supplication or in anger: but her prayers and her threats only served to redouble the laughter of her persecutors. This woman was the sport and derision of the prisoners, and yet she offered the strongest title to their forbearance which a female can present. But her ugliness, her imbecility, and the prevalent habit of regarding her as a victim devoted to their amusement, rendered her tormentors implacable, in spite of their ordinary respect for maternity.

Among the most relentless enemies of Mont Saint-Jean (for such was the victim's name), was a girl called *Louve.** She was a tall, masculine girl, of twenty; active, resolute, with some regularity of features; with coarse black hair, tinged with red; a florid complexion; a bluish down on her thick lip; and dark, thick, rough eyebrows, that met over her wild eyes. An expression that was violent, fierce, and almost beastly, arising from the habitual exposure of her white and scattered teeth, had secured for her the name of Louve.

There was, notwithstanding these revolting lineaments, more of boldness and impudence than of cruelty in her face; and one could understand that she was rather indebted to her degradation to the force of circumstances, than to depravity of disposition, and might have been included in that class which Madame Armand had mentioned to the marquise, as being susceptible of reformation.

"What have I done to you?" exclaimed Mont Saint-Jean, struggling in the midst of her persecutors. "Why do you torment me so?"

"Because it amuses us."

"Because you are good for nothing else than to be teased."

"It's what you were made for."

"Look in the glass, and you won't complain."

"You know well enough that I only complain when I can't bear it any longer."

"Well, well—we will let you alone, if you'll only tell us why you are called Mont Saint-Jean."

"Yes, yes; tell us that."

"I've told you a hundred times; it's the name of a former sweetheart of mine, an old soldier, who was wounded at the battle of Mont Saint-Jean, and I have stuck to his name. Ain't you satisfied? Why do you make me sing over the same song?"

"He must have been a pretty chap, if he looked like you?"

"I guess he belonged to the invalids."

"I know that I am ugly—a real monster; there is no denying it. Insult me, and laugh at me as much as you please, but don't beat me; that's all I ask."

"What have you there, in that old ragged handkerchief?" asked Louve.

"Yes, yes; what have you got there?"

"Show us your treasures."

* *Louve*—female wolf.

"Let us see them, let us see them."

"Oh, no! I beg of you!" said the poor wretch, clinging to the bundle with all her strength.

"Let us have hold of it."

"Twitch it away from her, Louve."

"How cruel you are; go of, and leave me alone."

"Tell us, then, what's in your bundle?"

"Well, then—I am trying to make up some old rags, that nobody wants, and which I have picked up, into baby's clothes."

"The clothes of a young Mont Saint-Jean must be funny."

"Out with them."

"Slip, cap, linen and all; let's see them."

"She must have taken the measure of the overseer's pup."

"Here goes; take the duds!" exclaimed Louve, tearing the bundle from Mont Saint-Jean's hands.

The old handkerchief was torn to pieces in the struggle, and a great variety of remnants of all sizes, shapes, colours, and texture, half-sewed together, flew about the yard, and were trampled upon by the prisoners, amid jeers and shouts of laughter.

"What trash!"

"She must have been plundering some rag-gatherer's basket."

"Here's your fine old clothes!"

"What a job it must be to sew all these rags together."

"There will be more thread than cloth, when 'tis done."

"'Twill be a piece of embroidery."

"Pick up your wardrobe, Mont Saint-Jean."

"What cruelty! what cruelty!" exclaimed the poor creature, running after the rags, which she tried to collect in spite of the pushes and jerks which they gave her. "I never have hurt any one; I offered all sorts of favours, if you would only let me alone: I have given away half of my ration, when I have been almost famished, but it is of no use. What can I do for peace? have you no pity for a poor wretch in my situation? You are more savage than beasts; I had to gather these little remnants because I had no money to buy cloth, to make up into clothes. What harm does it do to pick up the rags which people have thrown away!" But, suddenly, Mont Saint-Jean exclaimed, with an accent of hope: "Oh! since you have come, Goualeuse, I shall be safe. Speak in my behalf; they will listen to you, for they love you as much as they hate me." Goualeuse arriving, the last of the prisoners now entered the inclosure.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOUALEUSE AND LOUISE.

Before proceeding with the narration of this revolting scene, before introducing the angel-like face of Fleur-de-Marie into this frightful picture, we must return to the conversation of the Marquise d'Harville and Madame Armand, which had been for a moment interrupted. At the sound of the bell, the matron had hastened to one of the doors which opened into the yard, in order to suppress, by her presence, any outbreak of violence which frequently resulted from this temporary relaxation from the discipline of labour. Madame Armand had observed the cruel persecutions of which Mont Saint-Jean was the victim, and was about hastening to her rescue when Fleur-de-Marie arrived.

"She is safe," said the matron to herself; and she returned to the parlour in which the marquise was seated, who had been so much interested in the tale to which she had listened, that she was already inspired with hope, and anticipating the task of succour and consolation: "How true," thought she, "are the words of the prince: 'There is nothing more amusing than the works of benevolence.'"

"What you have just told me," said the marquise, without giving her companion time to apologise for her absence, "what you have just told me, is exceedingly novel; and this young girl, whose beauty, manners, and language, form such a strange contrast with her past degradation and her present situation, what relation does she sustain to the other prisoners? If she is endowed with the elevation of soul which you attribute to her, she must suffer wretchedly from associating with such degraded companions."

"Even to me, who am an observer from profession and habit, everything about this young girl is astonishing. She has not been here three days, and has already acquired a kind of influence over the prisoners."

"In so short a time?"

"They seem to feel for her not only an affection, but respect."

"Are these wretches capable of such emotions?"

"They often have a distinctive perception of the noble qualities of others, though they often hate those persons whose superiority they are forced to admit."

"And do they not hate this poor young girl?"

"Very far from it. She was known to none of them before she came here, and they were all struck with her beauty. Her features, of rare loveliness, are veiled, if I may so express myself, with a touching paleness; and her melancholy and sweet expression inspired them all with more of sympathy than jealousy. Besides, she is quiet and pensive; which is another anomaly among creatures of this class, who usually endeavour to drown the voice of conscience, by noisy laughter and amusement. And, although quiet and retired, she has shown herself kind and compassionate, which has prevented them from accusing her of being selfish and unfeeling. But this is not all; there was sent here, about a month since, an unmanageable girl, who, from her violence and audacity, has obtained the surname of Louve. She is about twenty years of age, tall and masculine, of regular but savage features, whom we are often obliged to confine in a dungeon, in order to overcome her violence. The day before yesterday, she left the cell, enraged at the punishment which had been inflicted upon her. It was at meal-time, and the poor girl to whom I have alluded, being unable to eat, said: 'I have no appetite; who wishes my bread?' 'I,' exclaimed Louve. 'I,' said another creature, who is called Mont Saint-Jean—the butt, and at times, the victim of Louve, although she has strong claims upon the pity of her companions. The young girl gave her bread to the last applicant, to the great disappointment and even rage of Louve. 'I asked you first!' exclaimed she, in a furious tone. 'That is true,' said she; "but as the poor girl is in such a situation, she has more need of it than you have.' Louve, however, tore the bread from the hands of Mont Saint-Jean, and began to vociferate, and brandish her knife. As she is held in great dread, no one ventured to take the part of poor Goualeuse, although all the prisoners justified her in their own minds."

"What did you call her name, madame?"

Goualeuse—that is the name, or rather surname, under which this young girl has been confined here, who, I hope, will soon become your *protegé*. They have nearly all of them some similar character."

"The name is a singular one."

"It means, in their dialect, the *Songstress*; for the young girl is said to possess a very sweet voice; and I readily believe it, for there is a great deal of melody in her ordinary conversation."

"And how did she escape from the frightful Louve?"

"The coolness of Goualeuse rendered her adversary still more furious, and she ran to her with insults upon her tongue, and her knife brandished on high. The prisoners all uttered an exclamation of fear. Goualeuse alone looked unmoved upon the formidable creature, and said to her, in a most sweet and touching voice: 'Kill me, if you will; but let me suffer as little as possible.' The words, I am told, were uttered with a tone of such thrilling tenderness, that tears were brought into the eyes of all."

"I can readily believe it," said the marquise, affected herself.

"The worst natures," continued Madame Armand, "have some germ of goodness in them. Upon hearing these words of patient resignation, Louve was very powerfully moved, as she afterwards confessed; and throwing down her knife, and trampling it under her feet, exclaimed: 'I was wrong to threaten you, Goualeuse, for I am stronger than you. You were not afraid of the knife; you are courageous, and I like courageous people; and if any one attempts to injure you, I will defend you.'"

"What a strange character!"

"The submission of Louve increased the influence of Goualeuse; and, until this time, a thing unprecedented, not one of her companions speak familiarly to her: they offer to render her all the small services of which their situation admits. I inquired of some of the inmates of the dormitory in which she sleeps: 'What was the cause of the deference shown to her?' They professed themselves unable to explain, and only replied: 'That it was evident she was a different being from what they were.' 'But who told you that she was?' 'No one told us—it is a thing that can be seen.' 'But how did you see it?' 'By a thousand signs. In the first place, last night, before going to bed, she knelt down and said her prayers. To pray in that manner, Louve said, a person *must have a right to pray*.'"

"What a strange remark!"

"These miserable beings have no sense of religion, and yet they never utter here an impious or profane word. You will see, in all of the halls, images of the Virgin, surrounded with ornaments and offerings, which the inmates of the prison have suspended. Every Sunday, a large number of candles are burnt as offerings. Those who attend chapel, behave with propriety, and holy places generally seem to command their respect or their fear. But to return to Goualeuse. 'It is plain she is not like us,' said her companions, 'from her mild expression, her melancholy, and the language which she uses.' 'It is plain she is not one of us,' said Louve, in a rough tone; 'for this morning, in the dormitory, we were ashamed to dress ourselves in her presence.'"

"What a strange and anomalous delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!"

"They shrink not from what female modesty usually dreads; they have also no shame in each other; but they are much abashed to be seen with their toilet incomplete by one of us, or by charitable visitors like yourself, my lady. Thus the instinct implanted by nature in the female bosom, reveals itself in these degraded creatures, in the presence of the only beings they can respect."

"It is consoling, at least, to find some natural feeling which overmasters depravity."

"It is, indeed. These creatures are also susceptible of attachment and devotion, which, if it were properly directed, could not but be creditable to human nature. There is another thing sacred with them, who have respect or fear for so few obligations, human or divine—it is maternity; they are proud of it, delighted with it. There are in no class more devoted mothers; they will sacrifice everything to keep their children near them, encounter almost any self-denial to rear them; for they say that these little beings are the only ones that do not despise them."

"They seem to be profoundly conscious of their own disgrace."

"No one can despise them as much as they despise themselves. In the eyes of many of them who have sincerely repented, the original stain remains indelible in their own estimation, even when they find themselves in a situation of respectability. The idea of their past degradation is so permanent and incurable with others, that it frequently deranges their intellects. I should not be surprised if the settled melancholy of Goualeuse proceeded from such a remorse."

"What a torture for her, this consciousness of a shame which cannot be effaced, must be!"

"Fortunately, madame, for the honour of our nature, such remorse is more common than is generally supposed. Avenging conscience never entirely sleeps, or rather, by a strange law, the soul watches while the body slumbers—an observation which I had occasion to make last night, in regard to our *protegé*. Frequently, when these wretched females are asleep, I visit their dormitories. You cannot imagine how the expression of their countenance varies in their sleep. Many of them whom I have observed during the day as bold, daring, and hardened, appear entirely changed when sleep strips all disguise from their features, all affectation of stoicism—for vice has its pride. What distressing revelations have their slumbers often made! What deep-drawn sighs, what involuntary shudders, when some dream has presented, in vivid colours, the awful reality to their mind! I spoke to you, a moment since, of this wild and ungovernable Louve. About two weeks since, she insulted me in the presence of all the prisoners: I remained unmoved at her wrath, and shrugged my shoulders with indifference. My phlegm exasperated her the more, and she used I know not what offensive epithets respecting my mother, whom she had frequently seen visit me."

"What infamy!"

"However contemptible the attack, it wounded my feelings. Louve perceived it, and seemed to enjoy her triumph. That night I visited the dormitory: I approached the couch of Louve, who was to be confined in the cell the next day. I was astonished—I can almost say, moved—by the mildness of her expression, compared with the savage insolence which was habitual to her face. Her features indicated supplication, grief, repentance; her lips were partly open, her bosom

heaved, and what would have seemed to me incredible, two large tears were flowing from the eyes of that girl hardened in iniquity. I watched her for several moments in silence, and I heard her lips pronounce the words: 'Pardon! pardon! —her mother!' I listened still more attentively, and heard her mutter, almost inaudibly, my name."

"She was touched with remorse for having insulted your mother."

"I believed so, and was more lenient to her on that account. She wished, doubtless, in presence of her companions, out of a despicable vanity, to exaggerate her natural insolence; but a good instinct during her sleep, moved her to repentance."

"Did she evince any sorrow the next day?"

"Not the least—she showed herself as wild, careless, and passionate as ever. I assure you, however, that nothing so much inclines me to compassion, as these observations which I make upon the prisoners during their sleep. It may be a delusion, but I frequently think that their better nature is restored to these miserable females during their sleep; that, although they may retain all their faults, their good impulses become more active, and their real character is no longer disguised by the detestable bravado of vice. And I had been induced to believe that these creatures are usually less perverse than they appear to be; and I have, from this conviction, succeeded in reforming those of whom otherwise I should have despaired."

The Marquise d'Harville could not but be surprised at the evidence which the obscure matron of this prison afforded of a rational understanding, comprehensive and practical views, and great kindness of heart.

"Indeed, madame, you seem to discharge your unpleasant functions with such a temper, that your office must have become to you a source of great interest and gratification. What an opportunity you have for curious observation and profound speculation upon human nature! but, above all, what good you have it in your power to accomplish!"

"The task of reform is a very difficult one; these females remain here but a very short time; it is therefore impossible to carry out any plan of reformation. You are obliged to content yourself with sowing, under the hope that in good time others will reap."

"You must be gifted, madame, with great courage and benevolence, not to shrink before the trials of a task which yields such returns."

"The consciousness of discharging my duty, sustains me. We are also sometimes rewarded by an unexpected discovery; we occasionally discern light in a heart which we regarded as entirely obscure."

"Women of your character must be very rare."

"No, no; the duties which I perform, many others discharge with much greater success and intelligence. The matron of the other department of Saint-Lazare, designed for the detention of prisoners accused of crimes, would interest you much more than I can, by the facts which she is able to communicate. She informed me quite recently, of the arrival of a young woman charged with infanticide. I have never heard of circumstances more distressing and peculiar than those which attend her case. The father of the unfortunate woman is an honest lapidary, who has been driven to madness by grief at hearing of the shame of his daughter. Nothing could be conceived more frightful than the misery of the whole family; they lodged in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple."

"Rue du Temple!" exclaimed the marquise. "What was the name of the artisan?"

"Morel; and his daughter's name is Louise Morel."

"It is the same."

"She was in the employment of Jacques Ferrand, a notary."

"This poor family have been recommended to me," said Clémence, blushing; "but I was hardly prepared to hear that they have been afflicted with such a terrible blow. And Louise Morel?"

"She affirms her innocence; she swears that her infant was dead at its birth, and her words have the accent of truth. As you take an interest in the family, if you would be good enough to see her, your kindness would alleviate her despair."

"I will visit her, and I shall have here two *protegés* instead of one—Louise Morel and Goualeuse—for all that you say of this poor girl, interests me much in her welfare. But what must be done to secure her liberty? I could then find a place for her, and watch over her interests."

"With the influence you possess, my lady, there will be no difficulty in releasing her from imprisonment; the whole matter rests with the prefect of police, and the recommendation of a personage of your consideration will be decisive. But I am wandering, my lady, from the observations which I was intending to make upon the sleep of Goualeuse; and I should not be surprised if the painful sense of her degradation was joined to another sorrow no less serious."

"To what do you allude, madame?"

"I may be mistaken, but it would not astonish me if the young girl, who has emerged by some means unknown from her first degradation, has felt and yet feels a pure love, which is at the same time the cause of her happiness and misery."

"What reasons induce the belief?"

"The obstinate silence which she maintains as to the place where she has spent the last three months since she left the City, induces me to think that she is afraid of being reclaimed by her friends."

"And why that fear?"

"Because she would then be compelled to avow her past history, which is undoubtedly unknown to them."

"True: her clothes were those of a peasant girl."

"Another circumstance has confirmed my suspicions. Last night, when I visited the dormitory, I approached the bed of Goualeuse, who, unlike her companions, slept very sound. Her face was calm and serene, and her long, light hair, released from her cap, fell profusely over her neck and shoulders. Her little hands were clasped together, and crossed upon her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep praying to God. I contemplated for some time her angel-like face, when, in a low voice, and with an accent at the same time endearing and respectful, she pronounced a name."

"And what was the name?"

After a moment's pause, Madame Armand said: "Although I consider a secret obtained in such a manner as sacred, yet you take such a generous interest in this young girl, that I can intrust you with it. The name was Rodolph."

"Rodolph!" exclaimed the marquise, with her thoughts reverting to the prince; and then reflecting that his royal highness the grand duke of Gerolstein had probably no relation with the Rodolph of Goualeuse, she said to the matron, who seemed astonished at her emotion: "The name surprised me, madame; for, by a singular coincidence, one of my relatives has the same name. But the information which you have imparted to me concerning Goualeuse, interests me so much, that I am more and more desirous of seeing her. Could I not have the pleasure to-day?"

"Yes, madame; I can call her, and can also send for Louise Morel, who is confined in the other department of the prison."

"I should be much obliged to you, madame," said the marquise, who was now left alone.

"It is very singular, nor can I account for the strange impression which the name of Rodolph has produced upon my mind. I must be deranged to think that any relation can exist between such a creature and the grand duke." Then, after a moment's pause, she continued: "He was right—how much I am interested in these charitable enterprises! The heart and the mind are both enlarged, when they are employed in such a noble occupation, as he remarks. One seems in some measure to participate in the operations of Providence, in succouring those who are deserving. And these excursions into a class of society of which no one has an idea—how attractive and amusing they become! What romance could inspire me with such touching emotions—could awaken such a degree of curiosity and interest? All that I have heard said of this poor Goualeuse, has affected me with the deepest sympathy. I allow myself to be borne blindly on by my compassion; for the experience of the matron is too sagacious to be exposed to deception. And this other unfortunate girl, the daughter of the artisan, whom the prince has so generously assisted in my name. Poor people! their awful misery furnished him with a pretext for my rescue. By hypocrisy and falsehood, I have been saved from shame. The load bears heavily upon me; but I will expiate my guilt by a life devoted to benevolent enterprises—my punishment will be my reward. It is delightful to yield implicitly to the noble counsel of the prince; his praise cheers and encourages me, and animates this new existence to which he has given life. I experience a perfect rapture in being governed by his advice, controlled by his thoughts. I love him!—oh, yes, I love him!—but he shall be for ever ignorant of this ever-enduring affection of my soul."

While the marquise is awaiting Goualeuse, we will return with the reader to the prisoners.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOUVE AND GOUALEUSE.

Fleur-de-Marie was clothed in the uniform of the prisoners—a blue gown and a black cap—but the coarse costume could not disguise her exquisite beauty. Her appearance, however, was much changed since her abduction from Bouqueval. Her face, the paleness of which was formerly relieved by a slight flush, was now as white as the purest alabaster; and its sorrowful expression was changed into one of dignified resignation to a destiny of shame. Fleur-de-Marie seemed to feel, that the patient endurance of every trial and sacrifice was the only path to her restoration to purity—was the only expiation she could make for her past guilt.

"Entreat them, Goualeuse, to have compassion upon me," said Mont Saint-Jean. "See how they have scattered about the yard the rags which I have gathered with so much industry! What pleasure can it afford them?"

Fleur-de-Marie opened not her lips, but commenced with great zeal to collect the rags which were thrown about the yard. One of the prisoners, in the spirit of mischief, retained under her feet a sort of spencer manufactured of coarse cloth. Fleur-de-Marie, still bending over her task, raised her imploring glance to the face of the girl, and said, in her touching accent: "I entreat you, in the name of the poor woman who is weeping, to let me have what is beneath your feet."

The prisoner raised her feet, and Goualeuse rescued the garment, and the other remnants which had been scattered about. Everything was now regained but a little cap, for which the prisoners were ironically contending with each other.

"Come, come," said Fleur-de-Marie; "show yourselves perfectly kind, by returning the small cap."

"Oh, yes; the cap, the cap! It must be intended for an infant harlequin: it is made of grey, green, and black, with a bed-tick for a lining."

The description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter.

"Laugh at it as much as you please; but I beg of you to return it to me, and do not trample it in the gutter, as you have everything else. Forgive me, Goualeuse, for compelling you to take hold of the dirty remnants," said Mont Saint-Jean, in a tone of gratitude.

"Give to me the harlequin cap," said Louve, who took it in her hands, and waved it over her head as a trophy.

"I beg of you to give it to me," said Goualeuse.

"No, no; you wish to return it to Mont Saint-Jean."

"Certainly, I do."

"Oh! it isn't worth while; it is nothing but an old rag."

"It is because Mont Saint-Jean will have nothing but rags in which to clothe her child, when it is born, that should move you compassion, Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, stretching forth her hand for the cap.

"You shall not have it," said Louve, harshly. "Must we always yield to you because you happen to be the weakest? You abuse your privilege."

"What merit would there be in yielding, if I were the strongest?" replied Fleur-de-Marie, with a graceful smile.

"No, no, I won't be fascinated again by your sweet voice. You shall not have the cap."

"Come, come, Louve, don't be cruel."

"Let me alone; you vex me."

"I entreat you."

"Do not enrage me. I said 'No,' and I mean no."

"Have compassion upon her tears."

"I care not for her tears. She was made to suffer."

"That's true, that's true; we ought not to have restored her rags," cried the other prisoners, influenced by the example of Louve. "It will vex Mont Saint-Jean the more."

"It will vex her the more!" said Goualeuse, with bitterness. "She is your victim. She must bear every injury you lay upon her. Her tears are your merriment. You must wear away time in some way or other. Should she be killed on the spot, you would not complain. You are right, Louve; you are just. The poor woman injures no one: she cannot defend herself; she stands alone against you all. 'Tis very brave and generous to torment her!"

"Are we all cowards then?" said Louve, carried away by her violence. "Will you answer that? Are we cowards?" added she, becoming more and more excited.

Threatening murmurs against Goualeuse were now heard among the prisoners, who began to revolt from the ascendancy which she had already acquired.

"She calls us cowards."

"What right has she to censure us?"

"She is no better than we are."

"We have been too kindly disposed towards her."

"And now she begins to put on airs."

"If it is our pleasure to vex Mont Saint-Jean, is it any of her business?"

"If she interferes, we will torment you more than we have done before. Do you hear, Mont Saint-Jean?"

"Take that to begin with," said one, giving her a blow with the fist.

"And if you meddle with what does not concern you, Goualeuse, you shall be treated in the same manner."

"Yes, yes; that's right."

"And this is not all; Goualeuse must beg our pardon, for having called us cowards," said Louve. "If we do not assert our rights, she will become a tyrant, and we were silly not to perceive it before."

"She must be made to ask our pardon."

"On her knee."

"Yes, on both of her knees."

"If she does not, we will treat her in the same manner that we do Mont Saint-Jean, her *protegé*."

"Down on your knees! down!"

"We are cowards, are we?"

"Repeat it, if you dare!"

Fleur-de-Marie was not in the least startled by these furious cries. She suffered the tumult to subside; and when it was possible for her voice to be heard, she turned her calm, beautiful, and melancholy glance upon Louve, who was vociferating, "Dare repeat those words again!" and said to her: "You, cowards! No, no; it is that poor woman whom you have beaten, whose clothes you have torn; she—she is the coward. Do you not perceive how she weeps and trembles? She, I repeat once more, is the coward, for she is afraid of you."

The instinct of Fleur-de-Marie did not deceive her. If she had appealed to duty, or to their sense of justice, she never would have disarmed the cruel and insensate wrath of these reprobates; but by invoking that sentiment of natural generosity, which is never entirely dormant in the most degenerate natures, she moved their compassion.

Louve and her companions continued to mutter, but they were touched with contrition.

"Your victim does not deserve your pity," continued Fleur-de-Marie, not wishing to abuse her triumph. "But does not her unborn child? Does it not feel the blows inflicted upon its mother? It is not sensible of the mother's cold, hunger, and suffering. When she entreats you to spare the rags she has had so much trouble in gathering, it is not for herself, but for her infant, that she prays. That cap made from remnants, and lined with ticking, which moves your merriment, moves my tears. You may laugh at both, if you are so disposed."

The prisoners did not laugh. Louve even looked with sorrow on the little cap, which she continued to hold in her hand.

"But I am convinced," said Fleur-de-Marie, wiping her eyes with the back of her hands, "I am convinced that you have not cruel hearts; you torment Mont Saint-Jean from want of any other amusement. But you forget there are two, herself and her child. If she held it in her arms, it would be to her an inviolable shield; it would not only protect its mother against all injury, but its sufferings would draw to its mother's hands all that you could bestow for its relief. Would it not, Louve?"

"Yes, yes; I would give all that I had, with my whole heart. I am not worse than others."

"Neither are any of us."

"A poor harmless little child!"

"Who would injure it?"

"No one but a monster."

"Even wild beasts spare them."

"I told you," said Fleur-de-Marie, "that your hearts were not wrong. Your error lies in not reflecting that Mont Saint-Jean deserves your compassion as much as if her child was in her arms."

"No, Goualeuse, that is not all," replied Louve, with enthusiasm. "You are right; we are cowards, and you were brave in daring to tell us of it, and not to tremble after you had told us. It is in vain for us to contend; we must all admit, that you are a different being to us. It vexes me, but it is so. We were in the wrong a moment since, and you are more courageous than we are."

"That is true: the little blonde must have courage to tell us such truths, right to our faces."

"But these blue-eyed people, soft as they look, when they are aroused ——"

"Are real lions."

"How grateful to her Mont Saint-Jean must be!"

"It is true, that when we beat the mother we beat the child."

"I have never thought of that before."

"Nor I."

"But Goualeuse thinks of everything."

"It is a shame to beat a child."

"Not one of us would be guilty of such an action."

Nothing is more changeable than the passions of a mob, nothing more sudden and violent, than the rapidity with which they rush from one extreme to another. A few simple and eloquent words from Fleur-de-Marie, had produced a sudden reaction in favour of Mont Saint-Jean, who was weeping with gratitude. All were moved, because a sentiment which is the last to maintain its ascendancy in these abandoned hearts, was invoked—the maternal feeling. On a sudden, Louve, who was violent and impulsive in all her emotions, converted the grotesque cap into a purse, and fumbling in her pocket, drew forth twenty sous, and throwing the money into the cap, said: "I give twenty sous to buy clothes for Mont Saint-Jean's infant—pass it round; we will cut and make them ourselves, so that it shall cost her nothing."

"Excellent! excellent! let us take up a collection."

"I will give something."

"'Tis a good idea."

"Poor woman!"

"She is as ugly as a monster, but still she is mortal."

"Goualeuse was right; the sight of clothes made of such rags, is enough to draw tears from the eyes."

"I will give ten sous."

"Thirty."

"Twenty."

"And I four, for 'tis all I have."

"I haven't anything, but I will put up to auction my ration for to-morrow: who will buy it?"

"I," said Louve; "I will put in ten sous for you, but you can keep your ration; Mont Saint-Jean's child shall be clothed like a young princess."

It would be impossible to describe the surprise and joy of Mont Saint-Jean; tears ran down her grotesque and ugly visage, and radiant with happiness and delight, it became almost touching. Fleur-de-Marie was also very much delighted, but she was obliged to say to Louve when the cap was presented to her: "I have no money, but I will work to the very extent of my power."

"My little angel from Paradise," said Mont Saint-Jean, kneeling at the feet of Fleur-de-Marie and attempting to cover her hand with kisses, "what have I done to deserve so much kindness from you, and from these *ladies* also? Can it be that such a favour is vouchsafed as clothes for my child—good clothes to cover and protect it? Who would have believed that this boon could have been bestowed upon me—me, who but a moment since was the jest and the victim of every one! It was not intended for my harm, but for my good, and I have this proof of it. I would not now complain if they should knock me down."

"We have raised eighty-four francs and seven sous," said Louve, counting the money which had been deposited in the little cap. "Who shall be treasurer? who shall expend the money? It must not be given to Mont Saint-Jean; she is too foolish."

"Let Goualeuse keep the money," was the unanimous cry.

"If you will follow my advice," said Goualeuse, "you will intrust the money to Madame Armand, who will make for us the necessary purchases, and who may be so much pleased with the generous action, that she may, for those who are deserving, solicit a mitigation of our punishment. Well, Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, taking her companion by the arm, "do you not feel happier than you did before, when you were scattering to the wind the poor rags of Mont Saint-Jean?"

Louve at first made no reply; wild defiance had succeeded to the enthusiastic expression which had lighted up her features. Fleur-de-Marie looked at her with surprise, not being able to divine the cause of the sudden change. "Come here, Goualeuse," said Louve, with a dark and wild countenance; "I wish to speak with you."

We believe firmly in the influence of certain master spirits, who have such a command over the sympathies and wills of the mass, as to sway its movements according to their own pleasure. Some of these controlling minds being themselves of a bold and energetic nature, address themselves to the worst passions of mankind, and lash them into a storm, as the waves of the sea are raised by the wind; but these storms are as furious as they are temporary, and to the violence succeeds a calm resentment, a sense of wrong and injury, which renders still more aggravated their degraded condition. Louve was one who was endowed with this fatal power.

There is a very different character, more rare than the first, because its generous impulses must be under the direction of a clear understanding, and have sufficient strength of head to equipoise the extacies of the heart, who are as powerful in persuading to good as the former to evil. Their salutary influence penetrates gently into the heart, as the warm rays of the sun infuse a reviving heat—as the cool dews of a summer evening refresh the parched and thirsty earth. Fleur-de-Marie was a personification of this benevolent influence. The power which draws the mind towards virtue is not so sudden and violent in its action, as that which attracts towards vice. Its effect is to soften, persuade, and, with a silent and gradual action, incline the impulses and movements of the heart. It is unfortunate that this power is not continuous in its operation; for the mind which has had celestial light poured into it, not unfrequently falls back into the darkness of error: the recollection of the more elevated emotions which once possessed it, gradually fails, and is finally completely effaced. At times, the hardened mind attempts to recal these impressions that have passed away, in the same manner that we attempt to hum the airs which lulled the slumbers of our infancy. The good action with which Fleur-de-Marie had just inspired her companions, was a fitting emblem of the passing sweetness of this breeze from heaven.

If the reader is astonished to see such displays of courage and authority, from the passive and resigned child of sorrow, he must attribute the change to the influence of the lessons imprinted upon her mind during her residence at Bouqueval, which had so developed all the powers of her nature. She understood that it was not sufficient to weep and lament over an irreparable past, but that active benevolence and vigorous effort were requisite to restore her mind to its original innocence.

Louve seated herself upon a wooden bench, by the side of Goualeuse. These two beings, so diverse in character, were now side by side.

The pale rays of the winter sun, from a sky sprinkled with fleecy clouds, fell upon them. A few birds, drawn from their retreats by the unexpected warmth, warbled in the branches of the tall trees within the yard; and two or three sparrows, bolder than their mates, came to drink from the waste-duct of the fountain. The sides of the stones which embanked the basin were covered with green moss, and in the interstices some scattered grass and stinted plants had survived the frost. The eye of Fleur-de-Marie embraced all these details, as it was fixed upon the water, in which the sun, the sky, the clouds were reflected; and her mind reverted to the beauties of nature, of which she was so passionately fond, and from which she was again excluded.

"What have you to say to me?" asked Goualeuse of her companion, who preserved a gloomy silence.

"We must understand each other, for this cannot last."

"I do not know what you mean, Louve."

"I said to myself, a moment since: 'I will not yield to Goualeuse,' and I have again yielded."

"But ——"

"But I tell you, it cannot last."

"What have you to say against me, Louve?"

"I am not the same creature, since you came here. I have lost my strength, my heart, my courage."

Then interrupting herself, Louve suddenly raised the sleeve of her dress, displaying her white, muscular arm, covered with a black down. She called the attention of her companion: she pointed out a device in indelible ink, representing a dagger buried in a heart, beneath which these words were inscribed:—

"Death to Cowards.
MARTIAL.
P. L. V."*

"Do you see that?" said Louve.

"Yes," replied Goualeuse, turning away her eyes; "it frightens me."

"When Martial, my lover, traced the words 'Death to cowards,' with a red-hot needle upon my arm, he thought that I was brave; but if he had seen me within two or three days, he would plunge his poniard in me as the dagger is buried in the heart; and he would be right, for he has written here death to cowards, and I am a coward."

"Why do you call yourself a coward?"

"Because I am one."

"Do you regret the good thoughts which have recently moved you?"

"Yes."

"I do not believe it."

"I tell you I regret them, for it is another proof of the slavery which you exercise over me. Did you not hear what Mont Saint-Jean said when she thanked you upon her knees?"

"What did she say?"

"She said that you turned us from evil to good: I was inclined to strangle her when she said it, for to our disgrace it was true. You change us from black to white; we open our ears to your words, and are carried away by our impulses and become your dupes, as we were a moment since."

"My dupes, because you have assisted this poor woman?"

"That is not the question," said Louve, in a rage. "Thus far, I have bowed my head to no one. Louve is my name, and I am well named: more than one woman has my mark upon her—more than one man also; it must not be said that a little girl like you has trampled upon me."

"How can that be, Louve?"

"I know not how: when you first arrived, you commenced by offending me."

"Offending you?"

"Yes. When I asked you for your bread, you gave it to Mont Saint-Jean, and I became so furious, that I ran at you with my knife raised."

"And did I not tell you to kill me if you pleased?" said Goualeuse; "that is all."

"That all? Yes, that was all; and those words knocked the knife from my hands, and bent me to your feet, to ask the pardon of you who had offended me. Was that natural? When I recovered my senses, I was ashamed of myself; and when at night you knelt down to say your prayers, instead of raising the whole ward to laugh at you, I said: 'She must be left alone to pray, for she has a right to pray.' Why were myself and companions ashamed to dress in your presence?"

"I do not know, Louve."

"You do not know!" said Louve, mockingly. "Perhaps you believe what we have told you in jest, that you are a different being from ourselves?"

"I never said that I believed it."

"No, you did not say so; but you act as if you believed it."

"I beg of you to listen to me."

"No; I have injured myself enough already, by looking at you and listening to you. Never before did I envy a mortal living; but I have caught myself two or three times recently in the cowardly and foolish act of envying you. Yes, I fairly envied the holy virginity of that face, those blue eyes, that light hair; I, Louve, who am a brunette, and always hated blondes, I wished to resemble you. A week ago, I would have marked the woman who dared to accuse me of it. It is not your happiness which I envy, for you are as melancholy as a Magdalen. Is all this natural? I ask again."

"How can I account for the impressions which I have produced upon you?"

"Ah! you know well enough what you can accomplish with your mild look and sweet voice."

"Of what evil designs do you then suppose me guilty?"

"Can I conceive? It is precisely because I am ignorant of the cause of these strange impressions, that I mistrust you. I have another thing to charge you with. I have always been before gay and passionate, but never thoughtful; but you have made me thoughtful. Yes, certain words which you have spoken, have produced a thousand sad reflections within my mind.

"I regret that I have made you sad, Louve; and I do not remember what I have said ——"

"But what you *do*," said Louve, interrupting her companion, with impatience, "is often as moving as what you say: you are so cunning."

"Be not angry with me, Louve, but explain yourself."

"Yesterday, in the workroom, when your head and eyes were bent over the work upon which you were engaged, a tear fell upon your hand; you looked at it for a moment, and then you carried your hand to your lip, as if to kiss away the tear."

"It is true," said Goualeuse, blushing.

"It may seem as nothing to you, but the expression upon your face moved me. Do you think there is any fun in that? I have always been as hard as a rock. No one can ever boast of having seen tears in my eyes; and for all that, I must have my heart filled with weakness at the sight of your pretty face: for it is nothing but weakness, as is proved by the fact, that for two or three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my conscience has troubled me so much. Yes, your company softens my heart, and I must put a stop to the process. I have had enough of your society; the consequences would be bad: I know well what I mean. I wish to remain as I am; I will not change, and be laughed at by everybody."

"And why would they laugh at you?"

"To see me, who have made every one tremble, play the fool. No, no. I am but twenty

* P. L. V. *(pour la vie)*—for life.

[Louve and Goualeuse.]

years of age; I am as handsome as you are, in my own way. I am savage—I am feared, and that is all I want. I care for nothing else; and let any one die who denies it!"

"You are angry with me, Louve?"

"Yes, you are a bad acquaintance; and if I should associate with you for a week, instead of being called *She-wolf*, I should be called *Lamb*. Thank you, I will not have that surname; Martial would kill me. Finally, I wish to be separated from you entirely, and I intend to ask the matron to remove me to the other department; if she refuses, I will commit some offence that will confine me to the dungeon until I leave this place. This is what I wished to tell you, Goualeuse."

It was clear to Fleur-de-Marie, that the heart of her companion, which was not entirely vitiated, was struggling with its better tendencies These indefinite sentiments of remorse had probably been excited by the involuntary interest which her company inspired. It is a happy thing for mankind, that there are certain spirits endowed with such powers of attraction, that the most hardened being who enters within their sphere, is assimilated in some degree to their own character. Certain apostolic missions have proved this fact. Within a very narrow circle of ideas, such was the singular relation which the spirit of Fleur-de-Marie had acquired over Louve; but the latter, by a singular idiosyncracy, or rather in consequence of an intractable and perverse disposition, resisted the benign influence which was acting upon her, in the same manner that a virtuous character struggles with energy against deteriorating tendencies. If we reflect that vice has a sort of fiendish pride, it will appear less surprising that Louve struggled to maintain her reputation as a fearless, ungovernable creature, and avert the disgrace of having

Lamb bestowed upon her as a surname. And yet so many generous impulses mingled with these struggles of her perverted nature, that Fleur-de-Marie was convinced that the germ of regeneration existed even in the abandoned soul of Louve, and the hope for her rescue, which had almost expired, now revived.

"The best manner," thought Goualeuse, "of proving my gratitude to my benefactor, is to infuse into the bosom of another, the noble thoughts which he has awakened in my own." Taking with great timidity the hand of her companion, who cast suspicious glances on her, Fleur-de-Marie said: "I assure you, Louve, that you feel for me an interest, not because you are weak, but because you are generous. Elevated natures alone are moved by the misfortunes of others."

"There is no generosity nor courage about me," said Louve, in a surly tone. "I do not wish you to say that I am moved, for it is not true."

"I will say so no more, Louve. But since you have manifested some interest for me, you will allow me, I hope, to be grateful to you."

"I don't care whether you are grateful or not. To-night, I shall be in a different prison from you, or in the dungeon; and within a few days, thank God, I shall be altogether free."

"Where will you go, when you leave this place?"

"Home, of course—Rue Pierre Lescot. I have a furnished room."

"And I suppose you will see Martial?" said Goualeuse, hoping to interest Louve by speaking of a being dear to her. "You will be very much pleased, I doubt not, to meet him again."

"Indeed, I shall," said Louve, in an earnest tone. "When I was arrested, he was just recovering from a fever, in which he had been thrown in consequence of his being so much in the water. I did not leave him for a moment for seventeen days, and as many nights. I sold half my furniture to pay the doctor for his physic. I boast of it, for if he lives, it will be owing to me. I had a candle burned for him yesterday. It may be all nonsense, but it often makes sick people much better."

"Where is he now, and what does he do?"

"He lives near the bridge of Asnières, on the banks of the river."

"On the banks of the river?"

"Yes; he is established with his relatives in a retired house, and he is always at war with the keeper of the fishing-grounds; and when he is once in his boat with his double-barrel gun, it is not very safe to approach him, I assure you."

"But what does he do?"

"He fishes, in violation of the law, during the night; and as he is brave as a lion, when some cowardly rascal has a quarrel with any one, he employs Martial to take charge of it. His father had some trouble with the police, and he has yet living a mother, two sisters, and a brother. It would be better for him if he had no brother, for he will lose his head one of these days, and his sisters also—but their necks are their own."

"And where did you become acquainted with Martial?"

"In Paris; he wished to learn the trade of a locksmith. A fine trade!—red-hot iron in your hands, and fire around you—plenty of danger; but he had a bad temper as well as myself, and could not endure his masters. Then he returned to his parents, and commenced the trade of poacher upon the river. He comes to see me in Paris, and I go in the daytime to see him at Asnières. It is quite near, but were it ten times as far, I would go there, even if I had to crawl upon my hands and knees."

"You must be very happy in the country, Louve, especially if, like myself, you love to walk in the fields?"

"I had much rather walk in a large forest with Martial."

"In the forests! And would you not be afraid?"

"Afraid! Pshaw! Afraid! Was ever a she-wolf afraid? The more lonely and thick the forest, the better it would please me. A retired hut, where I could live with Martial the poacher, accompany him in the night to set snares for the game, and if the keepers dared to approach us, send a bullet into them, and escape to the thicket—that would indeed be glorious!"

"You have lived in the woods before, Louve?"

"Never."

"Who has inspired you with these ideas?"

"Martial."

"In what manner?"

"He has been a poacher in the forest of Rambouillet. A year ago, he is said to have fired at a rascally gamekeeper, who fired upon him. It could not be proved in court, but Martial was obliged to leave that neighbourhood. He then came to Paris to learn a trade, but being unable to submit to the tyranny of a master, he preferred to return to Asnières, near his family, and make marauding excursions along the banks of the river. But he continually sighs for the woods, and he will return to them one of these days. He has talked to me so much of the forest, and of poaching, that he has filled my head with these thoughts, and it seems to me that I was born for such a life. But it is very natural. What our lovers like, we do. If Martial had been a robber, I would have joined him. The reason why we have a man, is to resemble him."

"And where are your parents, Louve?"

"How do I know?"

"Is it long since you have seen them?"

"I do not know whether they are dead or alive."

"Were they unkind to you then?"

"Neither kind or unkind. I was eleven years old when my mother ran away with a soldier, and my father, who worked by the day, brought into our garret a woman who was not his wife, and with her came two boys, one of six, and another of my own age. She was employed by day in selling apples, which she carried about in a wheelbarrow. We got along very comfortably at first, but afterwards there came to our place an oyster-woman, to whom my father showed great partiality, which enraged the apple-woman, and from henceforth there were such incessant quarrels and fights in our garret, that it used to frighten almost to death the boys and myself; for as we had but one room, there was but one bed for all three of us, close to the one which my father occupied. On Saint Madeleine's day—the birthday of the apple-woman—she reproached my father for not having wished her happiness. From words it came to blows, and my father at last split open her head with a broomstick. I thought it was the end of her, for Mother Madeleine fell down like a lump of lead; but her life was not so easily knocked out of her. She recovered, and frequently used to revenge herself

upon my father: once she bit out a large piece from his hand. These quarrels resembled the festivals at Versailles—better sustained on Sundays than week-days; on the one there were only blue spots, but on the other red."

"And was this woman unkind to you?"

"No; Mother Madeleine was rather hasty in her temper, but, with that exception, a very good sort of woman. But my father finally got tired of her, and, giving her the scanty furniture which the room contained, departed, and never returned. He was from Burgundy: I conjecture that he went back to his native place."

"And did you remain with Madame Madeleine?"

"Where could I go? She soon formed the acquaintance of a tiler, who came to live in our garret. The eldest of Mother Madeleine's boys was drowned at the Island of Swans, and the other was bound an apprentice to a cabinet-maker."

"And what did you do yourself?"

"I accompanied her with the wheelbarrow; I went and carried his dinner to the tiler, and when he came home drunk, which happened very often, I assisted Mother Madeleine to give him a sound thrashing, to make him keep his peace, for when he was in drink he was as furious as a mad donkey; he wished to kill everybody, and one time, if we had not wrenched the hatchet from his hands, he would have murdered all of us: Mother Madeleine, as it was, received a cut on the shoulder, which bled like a slaughter-house."

"But how were you reduced to your wretched condition?" said Fleur-de-Marie, hesitatingly.

"The manner in which I lived with the son of Mother Madeleine, and the dissoluteness of the tiler, brought me to my present position. I was fearful that Mother Madeleine, when she made the discovery, would turn me into the street; but as her disposition was kind, she told me that, since I was sixteen years of age, with a temper too irritable for trade or service, she would give me a profession authorized by the laws, and as I was without any parents to be responsible for me, she became my guaranty at the Bureau des Mœurs, where my name was registered. I saw Mother Madeleine about a year since. I was at that time having a drink with one of my lovers. She told me that the tiler had been sent to the galleys. I have not met with her again. Some one told me the other day, that she had been carried to the Morgue more than three months ago. I was sorry to hear of it, for Mother Madeleine carried her heart in her hand, and had no more gall than a dove."

Fleur-de-Marie, although she had been accustomed from infancy to an atmosphere of pollution, had since breathed so pure an air, that she felt a painful oppression at this horrible recital of Louve.

If we have had the courage to repeat this tale of infamy, it is for the purpose of bringing home to the understanding of the refined and elevated classes, the solemn truth, that however revolting it is in its details, it is a thousand times less so than the realities with which they are surrounded. Ignorance and poverty plunge beings born in the image of their Maker, into this frightful abyss of social and moral degradation. In a multitude of dens, children of all ages and of both sexes are thrown promiscuously together, like brutes of the same litter; while before their eyes are examples of drunkenness, debauchery, violence, murder, and not unfrequently, still more frightful and inhuman crimes, complete the catalogue of horrors.

The rich can envelop their vices in darkness and mystery, can observe the proprieties of life, and throw over their guilt the veil of decency and refinement; but the most honest workman may be compelled to restrict himself and family to a single room, to crowd all his children into a single bed. What must be the result when, instead of being honest, the father of such a family is plunged in ignorance and stained with vice? What a frightful example is spread before the tender mind of childhood, exiled from all that distinguishes man from the lower orders of creation! Can they have any idea of duty, virtue, truth? Will they not be brought up in as utter ignorance of all social distinctions as the abandoned savages of the New World? The galleys, or a still worse place, is the only prospect of their futurity. Let no one say that we are justifying such a result! Let the reader, however, compare the temptation to which a female who is brought up religiously in the bosom of her own family, raised above the pressure of want, with nothing but worthy examples before her, with the temptation to which such a creature as Louve was exposed, a creature born in vice, raised in vice, as a candidate for that infamous traffic which is authorized by the government! Yes, there is a bureau where shame is made legal by registries, signatures, and certificates—a bureau where mothers come to authorize the infamy of their daughters, and husbands of their wives! Must not society be radically corrupt in its organization, both in its social forms and in the laws which regulate the relation of the sexes, in which power—that grave and severe abstraction—is compelled not only to tolerate, but also to regulate and legalize such depravity?

* * *

Goualeuse, overcoming the emotion that the sad confession of her companion had occasioned her, said to her, timidly: "Listen to me without being offended."

"Well, speak on; I hope I have jabbered enough, though in fact it's all the same, since it is the last time that we shall ever again chat together."

"Are you happy, Louve?"

"In what way?"

"With the life you lead."

"Here at Saint-Lazare?"

"No, at home, when you are at liberty."

"Yes, I am happy."

"Always?"

"Always."

"Then you would not change your lot for another?"

"For what other? There is no other lot for me."

"Tell me, Louve," continued Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's silence, "do you not like sometimes to build castles in the air? In prison, it is so amusing."

"Castles in the air—concerning what?"

"Concerning Martial."

"My lover?"

"Yes."

"Faith, I have never thought of it."

"Let me then build one for you—for you and Martial."

"Pshaw! what good will it do?"

"It will serve to make the time pass."

"Well, let us have one of your castles in the air, then."

"Imagine then, for example, that you should happen to meet some one who would say to you: "Abandon your father and mother; your childhood has been surrounded by so many bad examples, that you are more to be pitied than blamed for what you have become."

"For having become what?"

"What you and I have become," answered Goualeuse, in a mild voice; then continuing: "Suppose this person should say to you, 'You love Martial, he loves you; quit both of you a bad life, and instead of being as you are, become his wife.'"

Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think that he would have me for his wife?"

"Why not? Except poaching, he has never done anything guilty."

"No: he has poached upon the river as well as in the woods, and he was right. Why are not fish the same as game, that any one has a right to? Where is the mark to indicate their owner?"

"But suppose that, after having renounced his dangerous, marauding life upon the river, he should wish to become an honest man; suppose that, by a frank determination to adhere to good resolutions, he should inspire such confidence in an unknown benefactor, as to obtain a good situation—made gamekeeper, for example. He who was a poacher would like such a situation, I imagine—you see this is but a castle in the air—the business is pretty much the same, only in one case it would be legal."

"That's true: a life in the woods is always pleasant."

"One condition only would be required—that he should marry you, and take you with him."

"*I* go with Martial?"

"Yes; you would be so happy, you tell me, to live with him in the midst of the forest. Would you not rather prefer, instead of living in the ugly hut of a poacher, where you would both have to conceal yourselves like criminals, to have a nice little cottage where you could be an active and industrious housewife?"

"You are joking with me. Is such a thing possible?"

"Who knows? it may be, though it is only a castle in the air!"

"Ah! that, indeed."

"Tell me, Louve; it seems to me that I already see you established in your little cottage, in the depth of the forest, with your husband and two or three young children. Children! what happiness! is it not?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Louve, with wild animation; "how proud I should be of them!"

"What company they would be for you in your solitude! and then, as they grew up, they would be of such service to you. The youngest would collect the dead branches for the fire; the eldest would attend to the pasturage of one or two cows, that would probably be given to you, to reward your husband for his industry and activity; for, having been a poacher, he would make a most excellent gamekeeper."

"That's a fact, it is true. Really, these castles in the air are amusing. Go on, Goualeuse, with more of them."

"Your master would be so satisfied with your husband, that he would make you presents, and allow you to have a court-yard and a garden; but then, Louve, you would have to work bravely from morning to night."

"Oh! if that's all, once alongside of Martial, work wouldn't frighten me; I have good strong arms."

"And you would have enough to employ them, I can assure you. There would be so much to do; the stable to take care of, your meals to prepare, the clothes of your family to mend; there's the washing-day, another day for baking, and then again, the house to clean from top to bottom; all of which would cause the other gamekeepers to say: 'Oh! what a housekeeper Martial's wife is, there is no one like her; from the cellar to the garret, her house is a miracle of cleanliness; and then, the children always so tidy—it is all owing to Madame Martial being so wonderfully industrious.'"

"Tell me, Goualeuse, is it a fact, that they would call me *Madame Martial?*" said Louve, with an air of pride; "Madame Martial!"

"Would it not be better than to be called *She-wolf?*"

"Certainly: I would rather be called by the name of any man, than by that of a beast; but, bah! bah!—a she-wolf I was born, and a she-wolf I shall die."

"Who knows? who knows? You ought not to shrink from a laborious but honest life, it would bring happiness to you. Hard work ought not to frighten you."

"Oh, no; as for that, it is not Martial and three or four young ones to take care of, that would trouble me, by any means."

"After all, it would not be all labour; there would be hours of rest. During the winter evenings, when your children are sleeping, and your husband smoking his pipe, and cleaning his guns, or fondling his dogs, don't you see, you could have such a nice little quiet time!"

"Pshaw, pshaw! quiet time!—to sit with my arms folded, and do nothing! Faith, no; I would rather be mending the linen of the family in the evening, in one corner of the room; that's not so fatiguing in winter, when the days are so short."

While listening to the words of Fleur-de-Marie, Louve became more deeply lost in dreams of the future, in being drawn further and further from the present; and experienced as lively an interest as Goualeuse had previously felt, when Rodolph portrayed to her the rustic pleasures of the Bouqueval farm.

Louve did not attempt to conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Remembering the deep and salutary impressions with which Rodolph had imbued her mind, by his joyous picture of country life, Fleur-de-Marie wished to tempt Louve by the same means; believing, with truth, that if her companion could be moved by a scene so poor, so solitary and rude, as to anxiously desire such an existence, she deserved both interest and pity.

Delighted at seeing her companion so interested, Goualeuse continued, with a smile: "Thus, you see, *Madame Martial*—for so let me call you, since there is no harm in it ——"

"On the contrary, it flatters me," said Louve, smiling and shrugging her shoulders. "But how foolish to play the *madame!*—we are like children. Never mind, go on; it's very amusing. You were saying ——"

"I said, Madame Martial, in speaking of your winter life in the midst of the woods, we forgot that the winter is the worst of the seasons."

"Ah, no! it is not the worst. To hear the wind blowing at night in the forest, and the wolves howling from time to time at a distance, I should never find tiresome; provided I was in one corner of the fireplace, with Martial and my little ones, or even all alone without Martial, if he was going his round. And then, a gun does not frighten me; if I had to defend my children, I should make good use of it. The she-wolf would take good care of her cubs."

"Indeed, I believe you, you are so brave; while I am such a coward, that I prefer spring to winter. Oh! the spring, Madame Martial, the spring!—when the leaves are so green—when the beautiful flowers are blossoming all through the woods, and smell so sweet, so delicious, that the whole air is embalmed by them. It is then that your children will roll about so merrily in the grass; and the forest will be so thick and bushy, that your house will scarcely be seen through the foliage. It seems to me, that I now see it from here. There is before the door an arbour of vines which your husband planted, and which shades the mound of turf where he sleeps during the excessive heat of the day; while you are going here and there, and now and then warning the children not to wake up their father. I do not know whether you have ever remarked it, but in a mid-summer, at noon, the woods are as silent as night: neither the movement of the leaves, nor the singing of the birds can be heard."

"That is true," answered Louve, almost instinctively losing sight more and more of the reality, and believing that she could almost see displayed before her the charming picture that the poetic imagination of Fleur-de-Marie had painted—of Fleur-de-Marie, so intuitively enamoured of the beauties of nature.

Charmed by the profound attention of her companion, Goualeuse permitted her own feelings even to be carried along by the delightful enchantment of the reflections that she evoked, and continued: "There is one thing that I love almost as much as the silence of the woods: it is the noise of the big drops of rain in summer, falling upon the leaves. Do you not like that also?"

"Yes, indeed; I also like the rain in summer."

"Is it not delightful, when the trees, the moss, the grass, are all wet, and emit a fresh and delicious odour? And then the sun, when it strikes through the trees, and makes all these little drops of water glisten, as they hang from the leaves after the shower—have you never remarked that also?"

"Yes, I do recollect it, now that you speak of it. How strange it is! You tell all this so well, Goualeuse, that it appears to me that I see it—see it all, just as you describe it. I do not know how to explain it to you; but, as you said, it smells so good, so fresh, like the rain in summer, of which you were speaking."

Poetry, like goodness and beauty, is often contagious. The coarse, rude, and unpolished nature of Louve, was compelled to submit to the mild and seducing influence of Fleur-de-Marie.

The latter continued, smilingly: "We must not suppose that we are alone in loving the summer rain; for, even the birds, how contented they are!—see them shake their delicate wings, and chirp for joy!—though not more joyously than your little children, who are as merry, free, and light-hearted as they. When the day is over, notice the youngest—how he runs through the woods at the sight of the eldest, who is driving home the two heifers from the pasturage!—how soon he recognises the distant tinkling of their bells, Louve!"

"Say, Goualeuse, it appears to me that I can even see the oldest and most robust placing his little brother astride upon one of the cows, and holding him there."

"Yes, indeed; and you may also perceive that the poor beast knows very well what burthen is on her, she walks with such precaution. But now for the supper hour. The eldest, while bringing the cattle from the pasturage, has amused himself by filling for you a basket of beautiful strawberries, which he has picked from under a thick bed of wild violets."

"Strawberries and violets! Oh, how delicious!

"But, my God! Goualeuse, where do you get such ideas from?"

"From the woods, where the strawberries grow, and the violets bloom. You have only to look at them, and pick them, Madame Martial. But let us return to the housekeeping. In the evening the cows must be milked, and the supper prepared under the arbour of vines; for you hear the dogs of your husband barking, and you will soon hear also their master's voice, who, although fatigued, enters the cottage singing; and why should he not sing, when, on a beautiful summer's evening, with a contented heart, he returns to a home where a good wife and lovely children await him? why should he not, Madame Martial?"

"That is true: he could do no otherwise than sing," said Louve, becoming still more thoughtful.

"Unless to weep from joy," said Fleur-de-Marie, deeply moved herself. "And such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, again, when night has set in, what happiness for him to be seated under his own arbour, enjoying the serenity of a lovely evening, breathing the odour of the forest, listening to the prattling of his children, and gazing upon the bright stars. Then the heart is full—so full, that it will burst forth into prayer. Why should He not be thanked, to whom we owe the freshness of the evening, the fragrant odour of the woods, and the soft light of the starry heavens? After praying or offering thanks, to sleep peacefully until the morrow, and then, again, give thanks to the good Creator, that such a poor and industrious, though calm and honest life, is granted to you daily."

"Daily!" repeated Louve, with a fixed look, and her head dropped almost upon her heaving breast. "It is true: God is kind and good, to enable us to live so happy upon so very little."

"Say, then," continued Fleur-de-Marie; "tell me, ought he not also to be blessed like God, who would give you such a peaceable and industrious life, in place of the miserable one that you led in the filthy streets of Paris?"

The word *Paris* recalled Louve suddenly to the reality.

A strange phenomenon had just occurred within the mind of this creature.

A natural picture of a rude and humble condition, a simple recital, occasionally lighted up by a partial glimpse of the domestic fireside, gilded by a few joyous rays of the sun, refreshened by the gentle breeze of the woods, or perfumed by the odour of wild-flowers, had made upon Louve an impression more deep and striking than could have been effected by the earnest exhortations of the most transcendant moralist.

Yes; according as Fleur-de-Marie continued, the desire of Louve to become the indefatigable housekeeper, the hardy wife, and the pious and devoted mother, grew stronger and stronger.

Thus, to inspire a debased and immoral woman, even for a moment, with the love of family, a respect for moral obligations, a disposition for industry, in promising that only which God gives to all—the sun of heaven, and the shade of the forests—or that which man earns by the sweat of his brow—bread and a shelter, was a most happy triumph for Fleur-de-Marie.

Could the severest moralist, or the most fulminating preacher, have accomplished more, in pouring on all the most threatening denunciations of human vengeance, or in showering down the most terrible thunderbolts of Divine wrath?

The bitter anger exhibited by Louve, on returning to the reality, after being charmed by the novel and salutary vision in which, for the first time, the words of Fleur-de-Marie had plunged her, proved the influence of those words upon the unhappy creature.

The more bitter were the regrets of Louve, in relapsing from this pleasing imagery, into the horror of her real position, the more evident became the triumph of Goualeuse.

After a moment of silence and reflection, Louve suddenly raised her head, passed her hand over her forehead, and arose from her seat, saying, with a most threatening and angry aspect: "You see, you see, that I had good cause for shunning you, and for not wishing to listen to you, because it would do me harm. Why have you talked to me so?—to jest with me, and tantalise me! And that, because I was fool enough to say that I should like to live in the midst of the woods with Martial. Who are you, then? Why would you thus derange me? Oh! you do not know what you have done, unfortunate creature! Now, in spite of myself, I shall ever be thinking of that forest, that cottage, of those children, of all that happiness which will never, never be mine. If I shall be unable to forget that which you have told me, my life will be but one eternal, hellish punishment! and all your fault—yes, your fault."

"So much the better: oh! so much the better!" said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Dare you to say, so much the better?" cried Louve, with a menacing look.

"Yes, so much the better; for, if your present miserable life should appear to you a hell, you would prefer that of which I have spoken."

"And what good will it do to prefer it, since it is not intended for me? What good to regret being what I am, since I shall die as I am?" said Louve, more and more irritated, and seizing in her strong hand the delicate wrist of Fleur-de-Marie. "Answer me! Why have you made me desire that which I cannot have?"

"To desire an honest and industrious life, is to become worthy of that life, I told you," answered Fleur-de-Marie, without attempting to disengage her hand.

"Well! after I am worthy of it? What does that prove? What have I gained?"

"The realisation of that which you look upon as a dream," said Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone so serious and convincing, that Louve, conquered anew, released the hand of Goualeuse, and remained struck with astonishment.

"Listen to me, Louve," continued Fleur-de-Marie, in a voice filled with compassion. "Do you think me wicked enough to awaken in you such thoughts, such hopes, if I was not sure, in making you ashamed of your present condition, of giving you the means of releasing yourself from it?"

"What! you? You can do that?"

"I? no, not I! but one who is good, great, and powerful."

"Powerful!"

"Hear me, Louve. Three months ago, I was like you—a poor, lost, abandoned creature. One day, he, of whom I speak with gratitude," and Fleur-de-Marie wiped her tearful eyes, "one day he came to me, and, debased and despised as I was, he did not hesitate to speak consoling words to me—the first that I had ever heard. I related to him my sufferings, my wretchedness, my shame, without the least concealment; in the same manner as you have just related your life to me, Louve. After listening to me with attentive kindness, he did not blame me—he pitied me; he did not reproach me in my humiliation, but he painted to my mind, and extolled the pure and calm life of the country."

"As you did just now ——"

"Then that humiliation appeared as much more frightful to me, as the future, which he showed me, appeared beautiful."

"My God! like me?"

"Yes; and like you, I said: 'Alas! what good can arise from showing me such a paradise? I, who am condemned to a life of infamous misery!' But I was wrong in despairing; for he, of whom I speak, is a superior being, supremely just, supremely good, and incapable of exciting a false hope in a poor creature, who asked from no one, neither hope, pity, nor happiness."

"And what did he do for you?"

"He treated me like a sick child. Like you, I was plunged in a corrupted, infected atmosphere. He sent me to breathe an air that was pure and reviving. I lived also among hideous and debased criminals; he confined me to those who were the image of himself, who purified my soul and exalted my mind; for, again, in his superiority, all those that he loved and respected, he endowed with a spark of his own celestial intelligence. Yes, Louve, if my words move you, if my tears make yours flow, it is because his mind and his spirit inspire me. If I speak to you of a happier future, that you will obtain through repentance, it is because I am able to promise you that future in his name, although he is ignorant at this hour of the promise that I give; and, further, if I say to you, 'Hope,' it is because he always listens to the voice of those who would reform; for God has sent him upon earth, that his Providence may be believed in."

While thus speaking, the countenance of Fleur-de-Marie became radiant with inspiration; her cheeks were flushed for a moment with the slightest tint, and her beautiful blue eyes shone with soft and brilliant lustre; her sweet, her angelic countenance, beamed with a beauty so noble, so touching and attractive, that Louve, already deeply agitated with the conversation, contemplated her companion with a wondering and respectful admiration, and exclaimed: "My God! Where am I? Do I dream? I have never seen or heard anything like it—it is impossible! But tell me, who are you that speaks so? Oh! I said with truth: 'You are a different being from us.' But, after all, you who talk so well; you who can do so much; you who know those that are so powerful, why are you here—a pri-

soner with us? But—but—is it not for the purpose of tempting us? You are here then for good, the same as the devil is for evil."

Fleur-de-Marie was about to answer, when Madame Armand came and interrupted her, for the purpose of conducting her to the presence of Madame d'Harville.

Louve appeared stupefied; the matron spoke to her, saying: "I observe, with pleasure, that the presence of Goualeuse in the prison has afforded happiness, and been beneficial to you and your companions. I know that you have made a collection for this poor Mont Saint-Jean. It is charitable, Louve. You will be rewarded for it. I was very sure that you was a much better creature than you appeared to be. As a recompense for this good action, I believe I can promise you that the remainder of your imprisonment shall be shortened."

And Madame Armand left, followed by Fleur-de-Marie.

The language of Fleur-de-Marie, almost approaching to eloquence, might excite surprise, did we not know that her nature, so wonderfully endowed, had rapidly developed itself, thanks to the education she had received at the Bouqueval farm. Besides, the young girl had derived much knowledge from experience. The sentiments she had awakened in the heart of Louve, had been awakened in her own heart by Rodolph, under nearly similar circumstances.

Believing that she recognised some good instincts in her companion, she endeavoured to arouse within her a principle of honesty, by proving to her—according to the theory that Rodolph had instituted at the Bouqueval farm—that it was her *interest* to become honest; and by exhibiting to her, under bright and attractive colours, the application of that theory.

We would here remark, that the general method of proceeding is ineffectual, and incapable of inspiring the poor and ignorant classes with a horror of evil and a love of good.

For the purpose of turning them from a wicked path, they are incessantly menaced by every vengeance, both human and divine; in their ears is constantly rung the most dismal and terrifying sounds—the clanking of prison keys, the iron fetters and chains of the galleys; and worse still, in the frightful penumbra at the extreme horizon of crime, is exhibited to them, gleaming in the bright glare of eternal flames, the knife of the executioner.

With respect to intimidation, therefore, we see that its operation is incessant, frightful, terrible.

To him who does evil, captivity, ignominy, death. That is right. But to him who does good! does society decree honourable rewards, glorious distinctions? No. By beneficent remuneration, does she encourage this immense mass of mechanics (doomed for ever to labour, to privation, and almost always to utter misery) to submission, to order, and to honesty? No.

With respect to the scaffold where the guilty ascend, is there also a staging for the good to mount? No. Strange and fatal emblem! Justice is represented as blind, holding in one hand the sword of punishment, and in the other the scales, where the accusation and the defence are weighed. Such is not the image of justice. It is the image of the laws, or rather of the man, who condemns or acquits, according to his conscience.

Justice should hold in one hand a sword, and in the other a wreath; with the one to punish the wicked, and with the other to recompense the good.

Society will then see, that if the punishment of the wicked is terrible, the rewards of the good are brilliant; even at this hour, in its simple and native good sense, it seeks in vain the counterpoise of the courts, of the jails, of the galleys, and of the scaffold. Society sees *criminal justice*, composed of intelligent, incorruptible and resolute men, constantly occupied in seeking out, and in punishing the wicked. It does not see *virtuous justice*,* composed of intelligent, incorruptible, and resolute men, occupied in seeking out and rewarding the good.

All say to him, 'tremble;' no one says to him, 'hope.' All threaten; no one consoles. The state expends annually many thousands for the mere punishment of crime. With this enormous sum it supports prisoners and jailors, galley-slaves and their guards, scaffolds and executioners. That is necessary; be it so. But how much does the state expend for the beneficial and encouraging remuneration of the good? Nothing. And that is not all; we will show, in the course of the story, when you are conducted to the prisons of men, how many mechanics of an irreproachable honesty would reach the height of their desires, could they but be certain of actually enjoying the condition of the prisoners, and always have the assurance of good nourishment, a good bed, and a shelter. And now, by virtue of their worth as honest men severely and sadly tried, have they not the right to enjoy the same benefits that are extended to criminals—particularly those who, like Morel the lapidary, had lived industriously, honest and resigned, in the midst of misery and temptation? Do not such men deserve to be sought out by society, and rewarded, for the honour of humanity, or at least sustained in the painful and difficult path which they pass through so bravely?

The good, the upright man, however modest he may be, is he concealed in an obscurity deeper than that of the robber or the assassin? and are not the latter ever discovered by criminal justice?

Alas! it is a Utopia in which there is nothing consoling. Let us imagine, for example, a society so organized as to possess, thus to speak, courts for *virtue* as well as courts for *crime;* a public minister signalizing noble actions, and proclaiming them for the observance and admiration of all, to the same extent as crimes are now denounced to the vengeance of the laws.

Let us take two examples, two recipients of *justice*, and answer which is the most productive of beneficial tendencies, important consequences, and positive results. A man kills another for the purpose of robbing him. At the break of day, the guillotine is solemnly prepared

* A few days after these lines were written, we reperused the *Memorial de Sainte-Hélène*, that immortal book, which we consider a sublime treatise upon practical philosophy; we observed this passage, which until then had escaped us. "This was also one of my dreams (it is the Emperor who is speaking). The great events of the war being accomplished and settled, after my return to the interior, and in the midst of tranquillity, I would select a dozen good philanthropists—those brave men who live only for the good of others. I would scatter them through the empire, have them visit all parts of it in secrecy, and be accountable to me only—they should be the *guardians of virtue;* to me they would report direct: they would be my confessors, my spiritual directors, and my relation with them would be the accomplishment of my secret good works. My principal occupation would then be, while at the summit of my power, the thorough melioration of the condition of all classes of society; I would even descend to the furtherance of *individual happiness*."

in some deserted corner of Paris, and the assassin is beheaded in sight of the dregs of the populace, who laugh at the judge, at the victim, and at the executioner. The last words of society are, murder! guillotine! The one is the greatest crime that can be committed against society; the other is the greatest punishment that society can inflict. Such is the most terrible, the most salutary lesson that can be given to the people—in fact, the only one; for nothing serves as a counterbalance to the blood-stained block. No; society presents no other encouraging and beneficent spectacle in opposition to this dismal exhibition.

Let us continue our Utopian speculations.

Would it not be otherwise, if the people had daily before their eyes, examples of great and lofty virtues applauded and actually rewarded by the state? Would they not be incessantly encouraged to do good, if they often witnessed an improving, respected, and august tribunal, calling before it, in the sight of an immense concourse, a poor and honest mechanic, whose long life of intelligent and industrious probity would be related, and of whom it would be said: "During twenty years, you have, in the midst of suffering, unremittingly laboured, and courageously struggled with misfortune. You have brought up your family in principles of uprightness and honour. By your superior virtues, you have become highly distinguished. Be exalted and recompensed. Just, vigilant, and all-powerful, society forgets neither the good nor the wicked; each one is paid according to his works. The state guarantees to you a pension sufficient for your wants. Crowned by public favour, you will end in ease and repose, a life that will serve as a lesson to all. Those who, like yourself, give evidence for many years of an untiring perseverance in a righteous course, and exhibit great and rare moral qualities, are thus, and ever will be, elevated. Your example will encourage the majority to imitate you. Hope will brighten the painful burthen which fate imposes upon them during a long life. Animated by a laudable emulation, they will struggle with energy for the fulfilment of the most painful and difficult duties, that they may hereafter become distinguished, and be rewarded, like yourself."

We ask which of these two spectacles, the murderer executed or the upright man rewarded, will produce the most beneficial effect upon the people? It is true many *delicate* minds will feel indignant at the thought of these ignoble rewards being actually granted to the most ethereal thing on earth—VIRTUE. They will advance against their tendencies, maxims or reasons of all kinds, more or less philosophical, platonic, or theological, and, more than all, those that are *economical*. For example:—"Good carries with it its own reward. Virtue is a thing without price. A contented conscience is the noblest recompense. And in fine, that unanswerable and triumphant objection, THAT ETERNAL HAPPINESS WHICH AWAITS THE GOOD IN THE NEXT WORLD, SHOULD BE A SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE TO GOODNESS HERE."

To this we will reply, that society, to intimidate and punish the guilty, does not apparently exclusively rely on that Divine vengeance which certainly awaits them in another world. Society anticipates the last judgment-day, by human judgments. Instead of awaiting the incxorable hour when the archangels shall appear in all their shining panoply, with clamorous trumpets and swords of fire, it modestly contents itself with gendarmes.

We repeat, to terrify the wicked, it materializes, or rather reduces to human and perceptible proportions, the anticipated effects of celestial wrath. Why should it not do the same with respect to divine rewards?

But let us forget these foolish and absurd Utopias, as impracticable as real Utopias, which in fact they are. Society is well enough as it is! Such at least will be the response of those who, with tottering steps, vacant eyes, and boisterous laughter, leave the joyful banquets.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROTECTRESS.

THE matron soon entered the small parlour where Clémence was seated in company with Goualeuse. Her conversation with Louve had brought a slight flush to the habitually pale cheek of the girl.

"My lady the marquise, moved by the recommendations which I have given," said Madame Armand to Fleur-de-Marie, "has desired to see you, and will perhaps solicit your release before the expiration of your sentence."

"I am much obliged to you, madame," said Fleur-de-Marie, in a timid tone, to the matron, who retired, and left her alone with the marquise.

Clémence, impressed with the frank expression upon the features of her *protegé*, of her deportment, marked by its modesty and grace, could not but remember, that in her dream Goualeuse had invoked the name of Rodolph, and that Madame Armand believed that the unfortunate prisoner was the victim of a powerful but concealed love. Although the marquise was perfectly convinced that there could be no relation between her young friend and the grand duke, she was compelled to admit that the beauty of Goualeuse was worthy of the love of a prince.

At the sight of her protectress, whose countenance, as we have before said, was illuminated with the divine beauty of her soul, Fleur-de-Marie felt her spirit drawn towards the lovely being, whose heart had been touched by her misfortunes, with an irresistible sympathy.

"My child," said Clémence, "the matron, while eulogizing the gentleness of your disposition, and the exemplary regularity of your character, has complained of your want of confidence in her."

Fleur-de-Marie hung down her head without a response.

"The dress of a peasant, in which you were clothed at the time of your arrest, your silence as to the place of your abode before you were brought to this prison, prove that you are concealing from us certain circumstances which may be important for your welfare."

"Madame!"

"I have no claims upon your confidence, my poor child; I would not wish you to think me inquisitive. But I have been informed that, if I should solicit your liberty, it would be granted; but, before doing it, I should like to converse with you about your projects and resources for the future. Once free, what do you propose to do? If you are determined to pursue, as I doubt not you are, the virtuous path upon which you have entered, impart to me your confidence, and I will place you in a situation to gain an honourable livelihood."

Goualeuse was moved to tears by the interest which the marquise manifested in her, and, after

a moment's hesitation, said: "You have condescended, madame, to exhibit so much kindness towards me, you show yourself so generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have thus far been compelled, by an oath, to preserve."

"An oath?"

"Yes, madame; I have sworn to hide from justice, and from the persons employed in this prison, under what circumstances I was brought to this place. But if you, madame, would promise me ——"

"What?"

"To keep my secret, I might confide in you without forfeiting my obligation; for there are respectable people undoubtedly in great anxiety on my account."

"You may rely upon my discretion, for I will only mention what you authorize me to repeat."

"Thank you, madame. I have feared lest my silence should be construed into ingratitude to my benefactors."

The sweet accent of Fleur-de-Marie, and her elevated and almost select language, filled the marquise with astonishment.

"I will not conceal from you, that I am surprised at your language and manners, and I cannot but wonder how, with an education so excellent, you should have fallen ——"

"So low, you were about to say, madame," said Goualeuse, bitterly. "Alas! it is only within a very short time that I have been blessed with this education: I owe it to the kindness of a noble benefactor, who, like yourself, madame, without knowing me, and without even the favourable testimonials which have commended me to your notice, deigned to take compassion upon me."

"And who was this protector?"

"I do not know, madame."

"You do not know!"

"He is only known to me by his inexhaustible benevolence. Thank heaven that I was thrown in his path!"

"Where did you first meet with him?"

"One night in the City, madame," said Goualeuse, casting down her eyes, "a ruffian wished to beat me, but this unknown benefactor courageously defended me. Such was my first interview."

"He was, then, a man of the lower orders?"

"The first time I saw him, madame, he used the language and wore the costume of the common people; but afterwards ——"

"Well, afterwards?"

"The manner in which he addressed me, the profound respect which the persons displayed for him to whom he confided me, served to convince me that he had assumed the garb of those who frequent the City, as a disguise."

"For what purpose?"

"I do not know."

"And you are ignorant of the name of your mysterious protector?"

"No, madame; I am thankful to heaven that I am able incessantly to bless his name. My benefactor was called M. Rodolph."

Clémence blushed deeply as the young girl mentioned this word. "And has he no other name?" she asked hastily of Fleur-de-Marie.

"I do not know, madame, that he has. He was called by no other name than M. Rodolph."

"What is his age?"

"He is still young, madame."

"Is he handsome?"

"His face is as noble as his heart."

The grateful and passionate accent of Fleur-de-Marie sent a pang to the bosom of the marquise. A mysterious and invincible premonition informed her, that the unknown benefactor of the forsaken girl was the prince himself. The remark of the matron, Clémence perceived, was not without foundation: Goualeuse loved Rodolph, and had breathed his name during her sleep. But by what singular coincidence could individuals, so widely separated in their social condition, have been brought together? Why had Rodolph assumed a disguise, and penetrated the gloomy depths of the City? The marquise was unable to solve these questions; but she called to mind the malicious fabrications of the Countess Sarah, about the eccentricities of the prince, and the strange passions to which he yielded himself. Was it not surprising that he should have rescued from ruin this creature of surpassing loveliness and uncommon intelligence? The marquise was endowed with most exalted qualities: she was, however, but a woman, and she loved Rodolph most devotedly, although she had determined to bury the secret in the deepest recesses of her heart. Without reflecting that the whole mystery might be referred to one of those benevolent enterprises in which the prince indulged; without reflecting that she had mistaken, perhaps, a sentiment of exalted gratitude for love; without reflecting that Rodolph might be ignorant of its existence, whatever its nature might be, in the first impulse of chagrin and injustice, she could not avoid regarding Fleur-de-Marie as a rival. Her pride was shocked, as she felt that she was blushing in spite of herself, as she thought of a preference which would be so disgraceful to herself. She said, therefore, in a tone which contrasted cruelly with the warm kindness of her first words: "And how is it, mademoiselle, that your benefactor leaves you in prison? How did you happen to be placed here?"

"Good heaven, madame!" said Fleur-de-Marie, in a timid tone, struck by the sudden change of her companion's language; "have I displeased you in anything?"

"And in what way could you displease me?" asked the marquise, with haughtiness.

"I thought that you at first addressed me with greater kindness."

"Indeed, mademoiselle! must I carefully weigh each of my words, and modulate each tone? Since I have consented to interest myself in your welfare, have I not a right to ask certain questions of you?"

Hardly had these words escaped from her lips before Clémence, for several reasons, regretted having spoken them: in the first place, on account of a meritorious triumph of generosity over a momentary pang of jealousy; and in the next, by harshness towards the young girl, she would defeat the object she had in view. In fact, the countenance of Goualeuse changed from a frank and confiding expression, to one that was shrinking and timid; and her heart folded up, in the same manner that the delicate leaves of the sensitive plant close and droop at the first touch.

Clémence continued in a tone the change of which was not so abrupt as to awaken the suspicion of her *protegé*: "Indeed, I repeat to you, I cannot understand how, after having received so much kindness from your benefactor, you are still a prisoner here; how, after having returned

with sincerity to the paths of virtue, you should expose yourself to an arrest, by frequenting a place which was forbidden to you. All this appears extraordinary to me; and you speak also of an oath, which is still more suspicious."

"I have told you the truth, madame."

"I feel assured that you have; for it is only necessary to look at your face, to believe all that you utter. But what I cannot explain in your present condition, increases my impatience and irritates my curiosity; and you must attribute to that the haste of my words. I believe that I was wrong. I have no claim upon your confidence, except my desire of rendering myself useful to you. I am touched with the proof of your trust in me, by offering to reveal what you have disclosed to no other; and I promise you, that while scrupulously silent as to any secret you may entrust to me, I will do also all in my power to aid you in the object which you propose to attain."

Thanks to this skilful mending of the matter—we beg pardon for the expression—the marquise reinstated herself in the confidence of Goualeuse, which she had for a moment lost; and the poor girl reproached herself for having misconstrued the words which had wounded her feelings.

"Pardon me, madame," she said to Clémence, "I was doubtless wrong in not disclosing immediately to you what you are desirous of learning; but as you asked me for the name of my benefactor, I could not resist the pleasure it affords me to speak in his praise."

"Nothing can be more meritorious; it proves that you are grateful for the services which he has rendered you. But under what circumstances did you leave the honest people to whom he confided you? Is the oath to which you refer in any way connected with that event?"

"Yes, madame; but, thanks to you, I am able, while keeping my oath inviolable, to inform my benefactors of the reason of my disappearance."

"Proceed, my poor child; I am listening to you."

"About three months since, M. Rodolph placed me upon a farm, situated four or five leagues from Paris."

"Did he take you there himself?"

"Yes, madame; he confided me to the care of a lady as kind as she was venerated, and for whom I soon felt all the affection of a daughter. She and the curate of the village, according to M. Rodolph's recommendation, took charge of my education."

"And did M. Rodolph visit the farm frequently?"

"No, madame; he only came there three times during my residence at the farm."

Clémence could not restrain an emotion of joy.

"And were you not very happy when he visited you?"

"Oh, yes, madame! It was more than happiness to me—it was a sentiment of mingled gratitude, admiration, respect, and some fear."

"Fear!"

"Between him and me, between him and the rest, there was such a wide disparity."

"What then was his rank?"

"I do not know, madame."

"But you spoke of the disparity between him and the rest."

"Oh, madame! what exalted him immeasurably above all other beings, was the supreme elevation of his character, and his exhaustless compassion for those who suffer. He imparts to all with whom he associates, his own enthusiasm—the wicked cannot hear his name without trembling; they respect him as much as they fear him. But, pardon me, madame, for again speaking in his praise, I will try to be silent; that will best express my admiration, for language is as inadequate to describe it as to express the greatness of God."

"Your comparison ——"

"Is perhaps sacrilegious. But can I offend God by comparing to Him, the being who has first taught me to distinguish between good and evil?—who has rescued me from an abyss of woe, and breathed into me a new soul?"

"I do not blame you, my child; I fully understand the enthusiasm of your language. But why did you forsake a situation which was so delightful to you?"

"Alas! madame, it was not a voluntary act."

"But who forced it upon you?"

"A few evenings ago," said Fleur-de-Marie, still trembling at the recollection of the events which she narrated, "as I was going to the parsonage, a wicked woman, who had tormented me during my infancy, with a man for her accomplice, having laid an ambush for me in a deep ravine, rushed upon me, and, after smothering my cries, conveyed me to a carriage."

"What was their design?"

"I do not know, madame: those who seized me were under the orders of some more elevated persons."

"What happened to you after your abduction?"

"The vehicle had scarcely moved, when the wicked woman, whose name was Chouette, said: 'I have my vitriol here, and I will throw it upon the face of Goualeuse, to disfigure her.'"

"Horrible, my poor child!—and who rescued you from such a cruelty?"

"The woman's accomplice, a blind old man, called the Schoolmaster."

"Did he defend you?"

"Yes, madame; upon this occasion, and also upon another. A fight took place between him and the Chouette, and by his great strength he compelled her to throw the vitriol out of the carriage. Such was the first service which he rendered me, after having aided to place me in the power of the Chouette. The night was very dark, and after we had been about an hour and a half in the carriage, we stopped near the place where the road crosses the plain of Saint-Denis: a man on horseback seemed to be awaiting our arrival. 'Have you seized her at last?' said he. 'Yes, we have got her,' replied Chouette, who was enraged because she had been prevented from disfiguring my face; 'and if you wish to dispose of her in such a manner that she will give you no more trouble, I can point out a good way—lay her down in the road, and let the carriage pass over her neck, and leave her: people will suppose that she was killed by some accident.'"

"What awful guilt!"

"Alas! madame, Chouette was capable of any iniquity; but, fortunately for me, the man on horseback replied, that he did not wish that I should sustain any injury; that he merely wished that I should be confined for two months, in such a manner that I could not inform or write to any one of my existence. Then Chouette proposed to take me to the house of a man who is called Bras-Rouge, the keeper of a tavern on the Champs Élysées. In that tavern there were several subterranean cellars. 'One of them,

said Chouette, 'might serve as her prison.' The man on horseback approved of the proposition, and assured me that after I had spent two months with Bras-Rouge, I should be treated in such a manner that I would never regret leaving the Bouqueval farm."

"What a strange mystery!"

"The man gave Chouette some money, and promised her more when I should be taken from Bras-Rouge, and started off at full gallop. We continued our journey to Paris. A short time before we arrived at the barrier, the Schoolmaster said to Chouette: 'You wish to shut up Goualeuse in one of the caves of Bras-Rouge, and you know very well that those places are almost always filled with water in the winter season, and I suppose that you desire to drown her.' 'Yes,' replied Chouette."

"But, good heaven! my child, what have you done to this cruel wretch?" exclaimed the marquise.

"Nothing, madame; but still she has persecuted me from my childhood. The Schoolmaster replied: 'I do not wish that Goualeuse shall be drowned, and I will not permit you to take her to the cave of Bras-Rouge.' Chouette seemed to be as much surprised as myself, that aid should be raised up for me from such an unexpected source; and she flew into a fit of violent rage, and swore that she would take me to the house of Bras-Rouge, in spite of the Schoolmaster. 'I defy you,' said the man; 'I hold Goualeuse by the arm, and I will not relax my grasp; if you dare to approach her, I will strangle you.' 'But what then do you intend to do with her?' exclaimed Chouette; 'she must be concealed somewhere for two months.' 'I can invent a plan,' said the Schoolmaster; 'we will approach the Champs Elysées, and order the driver to stop near one of the stations of police; you will go after Bras-Rouge to his tavern, and as it is midnight you will find him at home; he will accompany you to the carriage, and will take Goualeuse by the hand, and complain of her at the station of the guard, as being a girl from the City, whom he found wandering about his tavern—for such girls are sentenced to three months' imprisonment, when they are found upon the Champs Elysées—and as the name of Goualeuse is still upon the register, she will be sent to Saint-Lazare, where she will be as effectually concealed as in the cave of Bras-Rouge.' 'But,' said Chouette, 'Goualeuse will not allow herself to be arrested; once at the station of the guard, she will assert that she was forcibly seized, and will denounce us; and suppose even that she is sent to prison, she will write to her protectors, and everything will be discovered.' 'No,' said the Schoolmaster, 'she will go to prison without resistance; and she must swear to denounce us to no one as long as she is at Saint-Lazare, nor afterwards. She will do that, at least, for I have prevented you from throwing the vitriol into her face, and from drowning her in the cave of Bras-Rouge; and if she dares to violate her oath, we will set fire to the farm-house at Bouqueval, and murder every one there.' Then, addressing me, he said: 'Decide—take the oath which I require; all the punishment which you will suffer will be imprisonment for two months in Saint-Lazare; and if you do not take the oath, I will surrender you to Chouette, who will drown you in the cave of Bras-Rouge. Come, decide at once; I know that if you take the oath you will keep it.'"

"Did you take the oath?"

"Alas! madame, I did; the frightful death with which they threatened me, forced me to yield—almost any other form of death I could have endured."

"What a desponding spirit for a child of your age to possess!" said the marquise, looking at Goualeuse with surprise. "Will you not be rejoiced when you leave this place, and return to your benefactor? Will you not feel that the past has been effaced by your sincere repentance?"

"Can the past be forgotten or effaced?—can repentance annihilate the power of memory?" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, in such a desperate tone, that the marquise shuddered.

"But any grief can be washed away, my child."

"Does not the remembrance of infamy, madame, become more poignant as the soul increases in elevation and purity? Alas! the higher we rise, the deeper seems the abyss from which we have ascended."

"You have, then, lost all hope of restoration and forgiveness?"

"I expect pardon from others, madame. Your kindness proves that remorse always meets with indulgence."

"*You* are determined, then, to be the only one who is merciless."

"Others may be ignorant of what I have been, may forget or forgive it; as for me, madame, I never can forget it!"

"And sometimes you desire to die?"

"*Sometimes!*" said Goualeuse, with a bitter smile; and then, as if placing a restraint upon herself, added: "Yes, occasionally I do wish to die."

"And yet you feared to be disfigured by that horrible woman; and if you think so much of your beauty, it proves that life is not without its charms for you. Have courage, I pray you."

"It may be a weakness, madame, but if I have the beauty which you have been pleased to praise, I wish that it may be preserved, till with my dying breath I pronounce the name of my benefactor."

The eyes of the marquise filled with tears.

Fleur-de-Marie had pronounced these last words with such extreme simplicity, with her face pale, downcast, and holy, and with a melancholy smile that harmonised so well with her language, that the sincerity of this fatal wish could not be doubted. The marquise was herself endowed with too much susceptibility not to know how much there was mournful and unyielding in the thought of the poor girl, "*I never can forget what I have been!*" that it was one of those ever-present and fixed ideas which must torture the whole existence of Fleur-de-Marie. Clémence was ashamed of herself for having mistaken, for a single instant, the disinterested generosity of the prince; and regretted bitterly the absurd pang of jealousy which had gained a momentary ascendancy against the poor sufferer, who expressed, with such artless enthusiasm, her gratitude to her benefactor. The admiration for Rodolph with which the soul of the friendless prisoner was imbued, augmented the deep love for him which the marquise had vowed to hide for ever in her own bosom. To escape from these reflections, she continued the conversation.

"I hope that in future," said she, "you will be less severe upon yourself. But let us speak of your oath. I now understand your past silence—you did not wish to denounce those wretches?"

"Although the Schoolmaster had conspired against my safety, I was twice indebted to him for defending me, and I did not wish to show myself ungrateful."

"And thus you lent yourself to the designs of the monsters?"

"Yes, madame; I was too much frightened to oppose them. Chouette went after Bras-Rouge: he came and conducted me to the station, and informed the guard that he had found me wandering about his tavern. I did not deny it, and was accordingly arrested and brought here."

"But your friends at the farm must be suffering great anxiety on your account."

"Alas! madame, in the first impulse of my fear, I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from assuring them of my safety, and I am now much afflicted on their account. But, without forfeiting it, I think I can ask you to write to Madame Georges, at Bouqueval, to give herself no trouble on my account; but without, however, informing her where I am at present, for I promised to preserve silence upon that point."

"My child, these precautions will become entirely useless, if, at my solicitation, you are discharged; and to-morrow you will be able to return to the farm, without forfeiting your oath. Upon some other occasion, you can consult your benefactor as to what extent you are bound by an obligation imposed upon you by threats."

"You believe, then, madame, that by your kindness I shall soon be enabled to leave this place?"

"You are so deserving, that I doubt not that I shall be successful in my application, and that by the day after to-morrow you will be able to return to your benefactor."

"But how, madame, do I deserve from you so much interest? How can I express my gratitude?"

"By continuing to act as you have heretofore done. I regret only, that I cannot watch over your future welfare—that pleasure your friends have reserved for themselves."

Madame Armand now entered in haste, and apparently in consternation.

"My lady marquise," said she, "I fear that I am a messenger of evil tidings!"

"To what, madame, do you refer?"

"The Duke de Lucenay is below, and he comes from your house."

"Good heaven! you frighten me! What is the matter?"

"I know not, madame. My lord the duke says that he is the bearer of intelligence as melancholy as it is unexpected. He learned from his wife, the duchess, that you were here, and has followed you in haste."

"Melancholy news!" said the marquise to herself, and then exclaimed, in a distressing tone of voice: "My daughter!—perhaps 'tis my daughter. Oh, speak to me, madame!"

"I do not know, my lady."

"I beg of you, conduct me to the duke," said the marquise, leaving the room in great agitation, followed by Madame Armand.

"Poor mother!" said Gousleuse, sadly, following the marquise with tearful eyes. "Oh, no! it cannot be! such a calamity could not have befallen her at the very moment she was showing so much benevolence to me. No, no—it is impossible!"

CHAPTER XX.

A FORCED INTIMACY.

We will now conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, at about three o'clock on the same day of the suicide of the Marquis d'Harville.

M. Pipelet was alone in the lodge, and being a faithful and industrious labourer, was busily employed in mending the same boot which had so frequently fallen from his hands during the late audacious trick of Cabrion, to which we have referred. The physiognomy of the exemplary and continent porter was more sorrowful and dejected than usual. As in the humiliation of recent defeat, the downcast soldier passes sorrowfully his hand over the scars of former wounds, in the same manner M. Pipelet, heaving a deep sigh, would interrupt his melancholy labours, and extend his trembling finger over the fracture his venerable *chapeau* had received from the audacious hand of Cabrion.

His wounds were then torn open afresh—his sorrows, anxieties, and grief at the unprovoked and unceasing annoyances and persecutions inflicted upon him by his tormentor, awoke with all the pangs of a recent injury. It cannot be said that M. Pipelet was blessed with faculties of a very elevated order—it cannot be said that he had a very original or poetical turn of mind—but yet he possessed very good and substantial common sense. From the sedate and unimaginative character of his mind, he was unable to enter into the wild and roystering sport, or what is called among artists, a *charge*; and the worthy porter was now concentrating all his energies to devise some probable rational motive for the extraordinary conduct of Cabrion. He puzzled himself with a thousand profound solutions of the mystery, and at times, like the philosopher Pascal, he was seized with a vertigo while engaged in fathoming the bottomless abyss which the infernal genius of the painter had opened beneath him. Whenever he poured forth his heart in confidence to Madame Pipelet, he was immediately driven back upon himself by the coarse materialism of the portress, who, seizing upon facts and spurning theories, insisted upon regarding the whole of it as a joke.

A man of M. Pipelet's serious and grave turn of mind could not repose upon such an unnatural solution; he was rather displeased at the perverse blindness of his wife, and his dignity as a man was wounded at the idea that he could be made the victim of such a vulgar thing as a joke; no, he felt assured that the eccentric conduct of Cabrion was a mere veil, which concealed some dark, deep, and mysterious conspiracy. In the solution of this perplexing problem, the man of the broad-brimmed *chapeau* was employing all the energies of his intellect.

"I would rather carry my head to the scaffold," said the austere philosopher, who always magnified any proposition upon which his mind was employed, "than admit the conclusion that Cabrion persists in this wild and unnatural eccentricity of behaviour for the absurd purposes of a joke. A joke is played to catch the ear and move the mirth of the galleries, but in his last audacious enterprise the scoundrel had no spectators present; he acted alone and in the dark, as he always does; he clandestinely broke upon the solitude of my lodge, to profane my forehead with his polluting kiss. For what purpose?—for what purpose, I ask of any disinterested and

dispassionate mind? It could not have been in the spirit of bravado, for he had no witnesses of his audacity; he could not have kissed me to gratify his sensual appetite—the laws of nature are opposed to it. It could not have been a salute of friendship, for I have but one enemy in the world, and he is the man. It must be acknowledged that he was under the influence of some mysterious motive, which defies the power of reason to penetrate. To what, then, can this diabolical plot tend, which is pursued with a perseverance which alarms me? It is the unfathomable and impenetrable nature of the mystery which consumes my happiness, and gradually undermines my constitution."

Such were the painful reflections of M. Pipelet, at the time we introduce the reader. The honest porter had just opened afresh his bleeding wound, by touching a fracture in his hat, when a sharp and piercing voice, proceeding from the upper stories of the house, and echoed from the staircase, pronounced these words: "Quick, quick, M. Pipelet; come up here, be in a hurry!"

"I am not acquainted with that voice," said M. Pipelet, reflecting a moment upon the words which he had heard, and dropping the arm which was thrust in the leg of the boot.

"M. Pipelet, do make haste!" repeated the voice, in an angry tone.

"Those organs are entirely novel to me. It is a male voice which calls, that I can affirm; but it seems to me to suggest no sufficient reason for leaving my lodge, and leaving it also without a guardian. Desert it during the absence of my spouse? Never!" exclaimed Alfred, heroically, "never! never!"

"M. Pipelet, do come quick: Madame Pipelet is fainting."

"Anastasie!" exclaimed the porter, rising from his seat; "child that I am!" added he, resuming his position, "it cannot be my spouse, for she has been absent for an hour; but yet she may have entered without my having observed her. It would be extraordinary, to be sure, but I believe that I must admit the supposition."

"M. Pipelet, M. Pipelet, come up here quick: I have your wife in my arms."

"My wife in his arms!" said he, hastily rising.

"I cannot unlace Madame Pipelet's stays without help," cried the voice.

These last words produced a magical effect upon Alfred; he became purple with shame—his modesty was outraged.

"The masculine and strange organs speak of unlacing Anastasie's stays. I oppose it, I forbid it!" he exclaimed, as he started to rush from the lodge, but halted on the threshold.

M. Pipelet found himself in one of those critical and dramatic positions, which are often expatiated upon by the poets. On one side, duty charged him to remain in the lodge; upon the other side, the susceptibility of his character, and the voice of marital honour, called him to the upper stories of the mansion. In the midst of this perplexity, the voice continued: "You won't come, M. Pipelet? Well, I shall be obliged to close my eyes and cut the strings."

This final threat seemed to decide his wavering mind. "Sir! sir!" he exclaimed, in the voice of a Stentor, and rushing in affright from the lodge, "in the name of honour, I adjure, I adjure you to cut nothing, but leave my wife intact: I am coming, I am coming!" and Alfred rushed up the dark passage, forgetting in his agitation to close behind him the door of the lodge.

Hardly had the porter left the lodge, when a man suddenly entered, took from the table the hammer of the cobbler, jumped upon the bed, and by means of a few tacks, already inserted, nailed a thick pasteboard against the wall of the dark alcove, which we have described, and then disappeared.

The operation was performed so quickly, that the porter, who had hastily returned to close and lock the door, which he had forgotten in his alarm, had no ground for suspecting that any one could have entered the lodge during the interval.

After this precautionary measure, Alfred again rushed to the assistance of Anastasie, exclaiming: "I am coming, cut nothing; here I am: I place my wife under the guardianship of your honour."

The worthy porter seemed to be destined to emerge from one surprise to another; he had advanced but a few steps on the stairs, before he heard the voice of Anastasie, not in the upper story, but in the alley—the voice sharper than ever, exclaiming: "Alfred, Alfred, why do you leave the lodge without a keeper, you old runaway?"

M. Pipelet was at this moment about placing his foot upon the landing of the first floor; he stopped, as if petrified by the shock, with his face turned towards the bottom of the stairs, his mouth stretched open, his eyes fixed, his foot raised.

"Alfred!" again exclaimed Madame Pipelet.

"Anastasie is below, she is not up-stairs fainting," said M. Pipelet to himself, submitting to the incontrovertible deduction from the premises; "but where could have been the unknown and masculine voice, that threatened to unlace her stays? What is he? Can it be an impostor, who takes cruel pleasure in tormenting me with anxiety? What can be his intentions? It is certainly extraordinary. Never mind, do your duty, happen what may; after I have answered my wife, I will ascend the stairs and clear up the mystery—I will attempt to identify the voice of the man."

M. Pipelet descended, and found himself confronted with his wife.

"Is it you?" exclaimed the porter, doubtingly.

"To be sure it is me! Who do you wish it to be?"

"Is it you? Do not my eyes deceive me?"

"Look here, now; why are you rolling up your eyes in that style? Are you going to eat me up?"

"It is because your presence reveals, that most strange and mysterious events are in progress."

"What events? Come, give me the key of the lodge. Why do you leave it alone? I have just returned from the office of the diligence to Normandy, whither I went in a cab, to carry the trunk of M. Bradamanti, who does not wish to have it known that he is going to-night, and who will not trust that little urchin, Tortillard; and he is right."

With these words, Madame Pipelet took the key from her husband, and entered the lodge, followed by the porter. Hardly were the couple over the threshold, before an individual descended the stairs, passed hastily before the lodge, and disappeared.

This was the male voice which had so much excited the apprehensions of Alfred.

M. Pipelet fell heavily into his chair, and said to his wife, in a complaining tone: "Anastasie, I do not feel as well as usual to-day; there are very many strange things going on here."

"There you are again, with your endless fears. Strange things take place everywhere. What is the matter with you? Speak: you are all in a sweat. What ails you, old beloved?"

"Yes, I am in a sweat, and I have reasons for it; for things occur in this house, that knock a man down."

"What is the difficulty now? You never can keep yourself quiet a moment, but must always be trotting about the house like a starved cat, instead of quietly taking care of the lodge."

"Anastasie, you display your ingratitude, when you accuse me of trotting about like a starved cat; for it was for your sake that I trotted."

"For my sake!"

"Yes, to rescue you from an outrage which would have drawn tears from our eyes, and covered our faces with blushes. To save you, I deserted a post, which I consider as sacred as the sentry-box of a soldier."

"What! have they offered an outrage to me?"

"It could not have been offered to you, for it was threatened above stairs, and you had gone out. But ——"

"The devil take me, if I understand a word of what you are singing about; I believe that you are decidedly cracked. I must believe that the rascality of Cabrion has deranged your mind. Since his trick of the other day, you are not the same man; you look as if you were frightened to death. Must that rascal be always your nightmare?"

Hardly had Anastasie uttered these words, when a strange incident occurred. Alfred was seated with his face towards the bed. The lodge was partly lighted by the dim glare of a winter's day, and the glimmering flame of the lamp. At the time when his wife pronounced these words, M. Pipelet thought that he discerned in the obscure alcove, the immoveable and roguish features of Cabrion. The same man! the peaked hat, the long hair, the thin face, the satanic laugh, the pointed beard, the fascinating eye. For a moment, M. Pipelet thought that he was in a dream; he passed his hand over his eyes to dispel the illusion. It was no illusion. Nothing could be more real than the apparition. Frightful spectre! the body was not seen, but the face glared upon him from the obscurity of the alcove. As the vision burst upon him, M. Pipelet uttered not a word, but fell back suddenly, raised his right arm, and pointed to the face with such a gesture of alarm, that Madame Pipelet turned round to ascertain the cause of a fear which, in spite of her usual audacity, she now partook. She moved two steps backward, and grasping with nervous violence the hand of Alfred, exclaimed: "CABRION!"

"Yes!" muttered M. Pipelet, in a deep-drawn voice, closing his eyes.

The amazed stupor of the two beholders was exceedingly complimentary to the artist, who had admirably delineated upon the pasteboard, the features of Cabrion.

Recovering from her first surprise, Anastasie ran with the intrepidity of a lioness, jumped upon the bed, and pulled the pasteboard from the wall, to which it had been nailed. The amazon concluded the brave enterprise, by giving utterance to one of her ordinary expressions, as a shout of victory: "Go ahead!"

Alfred, with his eyes still closed, and his hands stretched forward, remained fixed and immoveable, as usually happened to him at critical junctures of his life. The convulsive trembling of his hat alone indicated the violence of his internal emotions.

"Open your eyes, old beloved!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, in a triumphant tone; "it is nothing but a painting—a mere portrait of the wretch Cabrion. See how I will stamp upon it!" And in the height of her indignation, Anastasie dashed the portrait to the ground, and trampling it under her feet, exclaimed: "This is the way I should like to treat the flesh and bones of the detestable villain!" and then picking up the portrait, said: "Look, look! how the rascal bears my marks upon him."

Alfred shook his head dubiously, without uttering a word, and made a signal to his wife to remove the repulsive visage.

"Did you ever know such an impudent fellow?" exclaimed the portress; "he has written at the bottom, in red letters: '*Cabrion, to his good friend Pipelet for life.*'"

"His good friend for life!" muttered the porter; and he raised his hands to Heaven, as if imploring it to witness the insulting irony.

"But how did it get here?" exclaimed Anastasie. "The portrait certainly was not here this morning when I made the bed—of that I am very sure; and you carried with you the key of the lodge when you left a moment since, and no one could have entered during your absence. I ask again, how the portrait came here? Did you nail it here by chance, old beloved?" asked Madame Pipelet, in a categorical vein.

At this monstrous and absurd hypothesis, Alfred started upon his seat, and opened his eyes wide in astonishment and anger. "Who! I?" he exclaimed. "Is there a human being who can suppose that I could hang upon my alcove the portrait of the wicked malefactor, who, not content with persecuting me by his odious presence, tortures me with dreams by night, and with portraits by day? Do you wish to drive me mad, to derange my intellect entirely, Anastasie?"

"Well, after all, suppose that you and Cabrion had settled your difficulties amicably during my absence, where would have been the harm?"

"Cabrion and Pipelet settle their difficulties amicably! Gracious Heaven, dost thou hear her!"

"And then, he might have presented you with his portrait as a token of friendship. If it was so, do not deny it."

"Anastasie!"

"If you made up with him, you must confess that you are as capricious as a pretty woman."

"My spouse!"

"But, after all, no one but yourself could have nailed the portrait to the wall."

"Me? monstrous!"

"What other person could have done it?"

"You, madame!"

"*If*"

"Yes!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, in wrath; "I am compelled to believe that you did it this morning, while my back was turned to the bed."

"But, my old beloved,——"

"I tell you, it must have been you, or otherwise I shall be forced to believe it was the devil;

for I have not left the lodge. I went up-stairs to answer the masculine voice: I took the key with me. You opened the door just now. Deny it if you can."

"All that is true."

"You confess, then?"

"I confess that I understand nothing at all about it. It is a joke, and admirably done, that I must say."

"A joke!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, carried away by the violence of his indignation; "here you are again with your jokes. I tell you, that all this hides an abominable conspiracy. It is a snare, a plot; it is an attempt to conceal an abyss by flowers. They are attempting to prevent me from discovering the precipice over which they wish to plunge me; all that is left for me, is to place myself under the protection of the law. I am thankful that God protects France!" and M. Pipelet walked towards the door.

"Where are you going, old dear?"

"To the commissary, to enter my complaint; and take with me this portrait, as a proof of the persecutions to which I am exposed."

"But of what will you complain?"

"Of what will I complain? That my most inveterate enemy will find means, by clandestine proceeding, to suspend his accursed portrait over my nuptial couch, and to ask if the magistrates will not throw over me their shield. Give me the portrait, Anastasie; do not present the painted side to me, 'twould shock my feelings. The traitor cannot deny that he wrote with his own hand: 'Cabrion to his friend Pipelet, for life.' Yes, for life! that is what it is for; it is to have my life that he persecutes me, and he will get it, I doubt not, before long. I shall dwell in continual alarm; I shall believe that this infernal being is always present, under the floor, in the wall, on the ceiling; that at night, his eyes stare upon me while I am sleeping in my spouse's arms; and that during the day, he is standing behind me with his sardonic grin. Who can say that at this very moment he is not here, somewhere concealed, like a venomous insect? Let us see: Are you here?" said M. Pipelet, accompanying his invocation with a sweeping motion of the hand, as if he would examine every part of the lodge.

"I am here, my good friend," responded, in an affectionate tone, the well-known voice of Cabrion. The voice seemed to proceed from the bottom of the alcove, thanks to ventriloquism, of which the eccentric artist was an adept, who had stood outside of the door, watching the minutest details of this scene. After having pronounced these words, however, he darted away, in order that a new mysterious topic for astonishment, wrath, and meditation, might be presented to his victim. Madame Pipelet, with her habitual courage and incredulity, looked under the bed, and examined every corner of the lodge, without discovering any one from whom the voice might have proceeded. She even visited the alley without being any more successful in her researches; while M. Pipelet, completely overpowered by this last blow, had fallen back upon his seat, in a state of desperate gloom.

"It is nothing, Alfred," said Anastasie, who always showed her strength of mind. "The scoundrel was concealed near the door, and while I was looking for him in one direction, he fled in another. Have patience; I'll catch him one of these days, and then I will make him swallow my broomstick."

The door was now opened, and Madame Seraphin, the housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand, entered the lodge.

"Good morning, Madame Seraphin," said the portress, who seemed anxious to conceal from a stranger's eye her domestic inquietudes, and assumed an affable and pleasing tone. "How can I serve you?"

"In the first place, I beg of you to tell me what is the meaning of your new sign?"

"Our new sign?"

"Yes, the small placard."

"A small placard?"

"Yes; black ground with red letters, nailed above the door of your alley."

"How so? In the street?"

"Yes, in the street, directly above your door."

"I am at a loss, my dear Madame Seraphin, to understand what you mean. Do you know, old beloved?"

Alfred remained silent.

"As it concerns M. Pipelet, he should explain it to me."

Alfred uttered an inarticulate groan, accompanying it with a shake of his broad-brimmed hat, which pantomime indicated that the philosopher was incapable of explaining anything to the comprehension of other minds, owing to the weighty problems with which his own was preoccupied.

"Take no notice of it, Madame Seraphin," said Anastasie. "Poor Alfred has cramps in the stomach, which make him exceedingly eccentric; but what do you mean by the placard? It belongs, I presume, to the wine-dealer, next door."

"No; I tell you it is a small placard, fastened above your own door."

"Come, come, you must be jesting."

"Not at all. I just observed it, when I was coming in. These words are inscribed in large letters: 'PIPELET AND CABRION CARRY ON A TRADE OF FRIENDSHIP, ETC. *Address the porter.*'"

"Good Heaven! is that written above our door? Do you hear, Alfred?"

M. Pipelet cast a wild glance upon Madame Seraphin. "He did not understand it—he did not wish to understand it."

"Is that written upon a placard over the door?" said Madame Pipelet, overwhelmed by this new atrocity.

"Yes, for I just read it; and I said to myself: 'How singular it is, that M. Pipelet, a shoemaker by trade, should inform the passers by, that he carries on a trade of friendship with M. Cabrion! What can be the meaning of this?' said I: 'there is something about it that is not clear, but as it says on the sign, 'Address the porter,' I concluded that Madame Pipelet would explain it;' but do look," said the housekeeper, suddenly, "your husband seems as if he were in a fainting fit; support him, I beg of you, or he will fall."

Madame Pipelet received the much-enduring man, half-swooning in her arms.

The last blow was too violent; the man with the broad-brimmed *chapeau* apparently lost all consciousness, in attempting to utter these words: "The wretch has publicly exposed me!"

"I told you, Madame Seraphin, how liable Alfred is to cramp in the stomach, to say nothing of a villainous scoundrel who is constantly pricking him to death with pins. The poor old darling

cannot endure long. I have, fortunately, here a drop of absinthe, that will, perhaps, place him on his feet again."

Thanks to this infallible panacea of Madame Pipelet, Alfred recovered by degrees; but hardly had he regained his consciousness, before he was exposed to another grievous trial.

A person of mature age, respectably clothed, with an open and inquisitive expression of countenance, the perfect ideal of a Parisian star-gazer, opened the glass portion of the door, and with an air of excited curiosity, said: "I have just seen written upon a sign above the door, '*Pipelet and Cabrion carry on a trade of friendship, etc. Address the porter.*' Will you have the kindness to tell me the meaning of this? I believe that you are the porter of this house?"

"What does it mean?" exclaimed M. Pipelet, in a thundering voice, giving vent to his smothered indignation; "it means, sir, that M. Cabrion is an infamous impostor."

The star-gazer, at this furious explosion, moved back. With exasperated looks, a fiery eye, and a red face, the porter had protruded his body half out of the lodge, supporting his wrinkled hands upon the door, while the figures of Madame Seraphin and Anastasie could be dimly discerned in the obscurity of the lodge.

"Learn, sir, that I have no intercourse with Cabrion, and, least of all, one of friendship."

"That's a fact; and you must have been kept for a long time in a jar, you old pickle, to come here with such a silly question!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, in a sharp tone, and showing her crabbed visage above the shoulders of her husband.

"Madame," said the star-gazer, gravely moving back another step, "signs are made to be read. You have put up a sign, and I have read it. I had a right to do so, and you are wrong in addressing me in such insulting language."

"Insulting! You are an old greenhorn!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, showing her teeth.

"You are an ill-bred woman."

"Give me your strap, Alfred. I wish to take a measure of this fellow's shoulders, to teach him not to attempt to play the buffoon at his age."

"Are you in the habit of insulting people, when they come to inquire about things written on your sign? You have not heard the last of it, I can assure you, madame."

"But, sir!" exclaimed the unhappy porter.

"But, sir!" repeated the star-gazer, in a passion. "Carry on your trade of friendship with your M. Cabrion, as much as you please, but don't stick your sign out into the face of passers-by. I feel myself obliged to tell you, that you are an impertinent and ill-bred puppy, and that I shall proceed immediately to enter my complaint at the police-office."

And the star-gazer disappeared in a passion.

"Anastasie!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, in a foreboding tone; "I cannot survive this—I feel it—I have had a death shock, and I have no expectation of escape. You see my name publicly exposed by the side of that scoundrel's name; he dares to proclaim that I carry on a trade of friendship with him, and the public will believe it. I inform you, that it is an infernal and outrageous machination, but it will terminate soon—the measure is now overflowing—I shall fall in the struggle;" and, overcoming his customary apathy, M. Pipelet seized the portrait of Cabrion, and rushed for the door.

"Where are you going, Alfred?"

"To the police. I shall tear down that infamous sign, and with it in one hand, and the portrait in the other, I shall proceed to the police to enter my complaint; I shall say to the magistrate: 'Defend me, avenge me, deliver me from Cabrion.'"

"Well said, old beloved; stir yourself, shake yourself. If you cannot remove the sign, tell the wine-dealer to assist you, and to lend you his ladder. If I had that scoundrel of a Cabrion, I would fry him in my pan; there are people beheaded who have not deserved the punishment as much as he does. I should like to see him on the scaffold, the miserable reprobate!"

Alfred gave proof, under the present circumstances, of a sublime forbearance; in spite of the exciting causes of complaint which he had against his persecutor, he determined to show him some mercy.

"No, no," said he, "even if I could, I would not demand his head."

"As for me, I would; yes, go—go-ahead!" exclaimed Anastasie.

"No," said Alfred, "I do not wish for blood; but I have the right to demand the imprisonment for life of this malicious being: my repose demands it, my health requires it, the law must grant me that reparation: if not, I shall quit France, my beautiful France—that is what they will gain by it."

And Alfred, buried in his sorrows, left the lodge majestically, like one of those imposing beings in ancient story, under the ban of fate.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

CECILY.

Before admitting the reader to the conversation between the portress and Madame Seraphin, we must inform him that Anastasie, without having suspicions of the notary's professions of extreme sanctity, censured, in unmeasured terms, his conduct towards Germain and Louise Morel; and she naturally included Madame Seraphin in the same ban of reprobation; but for reasons which we shall explain hereafter, the portress disguised her displeasure towards the housekeeper, under the exterior of the greatest cordiality.

After condemning the outrageous conduct of Cabrion, Madame Seraphin opened her business.

"Look here, Madame Pipelet," she said, "what has become of M. Bradamanti? Last evening, I wrote to him, but have received no reply; I came this morning to see him, and learned that he was not at home: I hope I shall be more fortunate on the present occasion."

Madame Pipelet affected great sorrow, and said: "Alas! you are in no better luck this time."

"How?"

"M. Bradamanti has not yet returned."

"That is intolerable."

"It must be a botheration, my dear Madame Seraphin."

"I have so many things to tell him."

"It seems as if fate was against you."

"Besides, I have to invent pretexts to come here; for, if M. Ferrand knew that I was acquainted with a quack, you can imagine how a man as pious and scrupulous as he is, would treat me."

"Just so with Alfred; he is so particular and so silly, that he is frightened every day."

[Exterior of M. Pipelet's Lodge—The Sign.]

"And do you know when M. Bradamanti will come in?"

"He promised to meet somebody at six or seven o'clock this evening; for he told me to tell the person he expected, to call again if he should not happen to be in. If you will call in the evening, you will be sure to find him;" and Anastasie added, in her own mind: "Yes, by that time he will be on his way to Normandy."

"I will then return this evening," said Madame Seraphin, in a disappointed tone; "I have something in addition to tell you, my dear Madame Pipelet: you know what has happened to that wretch Louise, whom every one thought so exceedingly well-behaved."

"Don't mention it," said Madame Pipelet, elevating her eyes in virtuous abhorrence; "it makes my hair stand on end to think of it."

"We are, then, without any servant at present, and if you happen to hear of any girl with a good character, who is honest and industrious, I hope you will be kind enough to send her to me. Good servants are very difficult to find now-a-days, and I have to make inquiries upon every side."

"If I hear of any one, Madame Seraphin, be sure I will let you know of it; good places are as rare as good servants;" and again she added, mentally: "I suppose she will starve to death in your house; your master is so stingy and so savage—to denounce upon the same day, Germain and Louise Morel."

"It is not necessary for me to tell you how quiet our house is. It is a great benefit to a young girl to have a situation there; and that Louise must have been desperately wicked, to turn out as she did, after all the good advice which M. Ferrand gave her."

"It must have been so, indeed. You may rely upon it, if I hear of any young girl, such as you desire, I will send her immediately."

"I have a word more to say. M. Ferrand desires that the servant should have no connections; for then she would have no excuse for going out, and fewer opportunities to ruin herself; so that if an orphan-girl could be found, M. Ferrand would prefer her. In the first place, it would be a charitable action, and, in the next place, having no pretext for going out, she would not be exposed to so many temptations. The fate of Louise has been a solemn warning to M. Ferrand, I assure you, Madame Pipelet; and it is the misfortune which renders it so difficult to suit him with a servant: such a scandal in a house as sanctimonious as ours! Well, well; I will come back this evening, and as I pass up to M. Bradamanti's room, I will call on Mother Burette."

"Good afternoon, Madame Seraphin. You will find M. Bradamanti this evening, you may be assured."

Madame Seraphin departed.

"What in the world is she continually running after M. Bradamanti for?" said Madame Pipelet to herself; "and he is determined not to see her before his departure for Normandy. I was very much afraid she would not go before the lady came that M. Bradamanti is expecting this evening. When she came here yesterday, I could not see her very well; but now I will try as much to see her face as I did that of the lady who came to see the tuppenny commandant; he has never returned here since, and I intend to burn up the wood of the silly coxcomb. Go-ahead with your miserable twelve francs, and your glow-worm dressing-gown; it did you much good. But who can this lady of M. Bradamanti's be?—is she of a high or low rank? I should like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie; it is not my fault, for I was made so. He must look out for himself, since he knows my temper. I have now an idea, and a famous one, to find out the name of that lady. But who is this coming? Ah! it is my tenant, my king of tenants. Good afternoon, M. Rodolph, said Madame Pipelet, in a military attitude, with the back of her left hand raised to her periwig.

It was, in fact, Rodolph, who was as yet ignorant of the death of the Marquis d'Harville.

"Good day, Madame Pipelet. Is Mademoiselle Rigolette at home? I have something to say to her."

"She?—the dear little kitten!—is she not always at home at her work?—does she ever have a holiday?"

"And how is the wife of Morel?—has she recovered her courage?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph: she and her children, thanks to you, or to their benefactor whose agent you are, now are perfectly happy, like fishes in water; they have fire, air, water, good beds, excellent food, and a nurse to take care of them; saying nothing of Mademoiselle Rigolette, who, while working like a little beaver, without making any noise, don't lose sight of them, I can tell you; and then, on your part, a negro physician has been to see Morel's wife. Ha, ha! do tell me, M. Rodolph! I said to myself: 'This must be the physician made for coal-heavers, for he can feel of their pulse without soiling his hands.' But never mind, the colour is nothing; he seems to be a famous doctor, for he gave some drink to Morel's wife, which seemed to revive her instantly"

"Poor woman! she must be very sad."

"Oh, yes! M. Rodolph; how can it be otherwise? her husband crazy, and Louise in prison. The misfortune of her daughter is that which breaks her heart; for an honest family, it is a terrible blow. And, now I think of it, Mother Seraphin, the housekeeper of the notary, was here but a few moments since, and speaking abominable words about the poor girl. If there hadn't been a gudgeon which I wished Mother Seraphin to swallow, I should not have let it pass in that manner; but I kept dark for a moment on purpose. Did she not have the impudence to ask me, if I knew of any young girl who would take the place of Louise, at the house of that old wretch of a notary! Is he not as cunning as he is stingy? He wishes an orphan-girl for a servant, if one can be found. Do you know why, M. Rodolph? They pretend that, because an orphan has no relations, she would have no excuse for going out and exposing herself to temptation; but that is not the reason. The fact is, they wish to catch a poor girl without any friends, that they may cheat her out of her wages. Is it not so, M. Rodolph?"

"Yes, yes," he replied, with a thoughtful air.

Rodolph foresaw, in this application of Madame Seraphin for an orphan-girl to supply the place of Louise, an almost certain means of inflicting upon the notary the punishment which he had designed. While Madame Pipelet was talking, he was arranging the plan of which he had designed Cecily as the principal instrument, in order to inflict a deserved retribution upon the tormentor of Louise Morel.

"I was very certain you would agree with me," said Madame Pipelet. "Yes, I repeat it; yes, they desire an orphan for no other reason than to cheat her; and I would rather suffer martyrdom than send them any one. I don't know of anybody, but if I did, I would prevent them from going to such a place, with all my strength; and I should act right, should I not, M. Rodolph?"

"Madame Pipelet, may I hope that you will confer a great favour upon me?"

"Speak, speak! M. Rodolph, what is it? Shall I throw myself into the fire? curl my periwig with boiling oil? Shall I bite somebody? Speak; I will be anything for your service. My heart and my service are both your slaves. I will do anything for you that is consistent with fidelity to Alfred."

"Be quiet, Madame Pipelet. I have a young orphan to place in a situation. She is a stranger in Paris; she never was here before. I should like to have her take service with M. Ferrand."

"You smother me! What, go to that old house? live with that stingy dog?"

"Yes; it is all that, but still it is a situation. And if the young girl of whom I speak, does not like it, she can leave the house afterwards. But she will at least find a way of earning her living, and I shall not be troubled on her account."

"Well, well, M. Rodolph, it is your own business; you are informed about the character of the house; and if, notwithstanding, you like the place, I have nothing to say. Besides, I must be just to the notary. If there are things against him, there are things in his favour. He is as stupid as a donkey, pious as a sexton; but he is as honest a man as ever lived. He gives small wages, but he pays it punctually; the food is miserable, but it is the same every day. In short, it is a house where one must work like a horse, but where there is small risk of a girl's going astray. The case of Louise Morel was an exception."

"Madame Pipelet, I am about to confide a secret to your honour."

"Upon the word of Anastasie Pipelet, born Galimard, as true as there is but one God in heaven, or as true as that Alfred wears none but green coats, I promise and vow to be as silent as a fish."

"You must not speak of it to M. Pipelet."

"I swear it on the head of my old beloved, if the matter is an honest one."

"Ah! Madame Pipelet."

"Well, then, we can stuff him with any story that we please. He never shall know anything about it; he is a perfect baby in innocence and simplicity."

"I have confidence in you, Madame Pipelet, therefore hear me."

"It is between us for life and death. Proceed, my king of tenants."

"The young girl I mention has committed a fault."

"I understand: had I not at the age of fifteen married Alfred, I should have committed scores of follies—nay, hundreds. I was always just as you see me now; quick as saltpetre, upon my word. Fortunately, the virtue of M. Pipelet has extinguished my warmth, or I might have been guilty of innumerable follies. All this is to show that if the young girl only committed one fault, there is great hope for her yet."

"I believe it myself. She was a servant in Germany, in the family of one of my relatives; the son of that relative was the partner of her guilt. Do you understand?"

"Go-ahead! To be sure I do: as if I never committed a fault myself!"

"The mother turned the girl into the street, but the young man was foolish enough to leave his father's house, and bring the girl with him to Paris."

"It is just like young people."

"When the hour of reflection came, which was increased in bitterness by the fact that he had but little money, he applied to me, and I promised to furnish him with enough to return to his father, provided he would forsake the girl, and that I would attempt to find her a place."

"I could have done no more for my own son, if I had one."

"I am delighted with your approbation. But as the young girl has no one to be responsible for her, and is also a stranger, it is somewhat difficult to provide for her a place. If you would inform Madame Seraphin, that one of your relatives, who is settled in Germany, had recommended to you this girl, perhaps the notary would receive her into his family. I should be doubly satisfied, for Cecily—that is her name—who has only wandered, would certainly improve in her conduct, in a house so devout as that of the notary. That is the reason why I wish her to enter into service with M. Jacques Ferrand. It is unnecessary for me to state, that being presented by a person of your respectable character ——"

"Oh! M. Rodolph."

"So estimable."

"My king of tenants!"

"That the young lady, in short, recommended by you, would certainly be accepted by Madame Seraphin, whereas if she was presented by me ——"

"All this I understand: it would be the same as if I introduced a young man. Very well—all right! it suits me perfectly—go a-head! You are in for it, old Mother Seraphin, and I'm glad of it, for I've a pique against you. I will answer to you for the affair, M. Rodolph; I will make her see stars at noon. I'll tell her, that I don't know for how long that I have had a cousin established in Germany, by the name of Galimard; that I have just received the news that she is defunct, as well as her husband; and that their daughter, who is an orphan, will be left, one of these days, upon my hands."

"Very well: you will yourself conduct Cecily to M. Ferrand's, without saying one word more to Madame Seraphin, for as it is twenty years since you have seen your relatives, you will have no answer to make to their questions, except that since their departure for Germany, you have heard nothing of them."

"But what if the girl speaks nothing but German?"

"She speaks French perfectly well. I will give her the instructions which will be necessary, and there will be no need of your giving yourself any trouble, except to recommend her in very strong terms to Madame Seraphin; or, the thought now occurs to me, that it will not be the best to press her very urgently upon them, for sometimes, to entreat a favour, is the very way to be refused."

"Do you say that to me? That is the very reason why I have always mistrusted flatterers. If they ask me nothing—I do not say—but ——"

"That is always the case. Do not, therefore, make any proposition to Madame Seraphin, but watch her well. Say only that Cecily is an orphan, very young, quite pretty; that she will be a heavy burden upon you; that you have for her but little affection, because you quarrelled with your cousin, and that you do not thank her much for the present which she has made to you."

"Good gracious, how cunning you are! But be easy, there is a pair of us: we understand each other perfectly. If you had only been of my age, at the time of my life of which I just spoke, who knows ——"

"Hush!—M. Pipelet!"

"Poor man! he does not think of such trifles. If you only knew of the last atrocity of Cabrion—but I will tell you of it at some other time. As for the young girl, you need give yourself no uneasiness about her; I'll bet I'll make old Mother Seraphin beg me to place my cousin in her house."

"If you succeed, Madame Pipelet, I will give you a hundred francs. I am not rich, but ——"

"Are you jesting, M. Rodolph?—do you think I do this act out of mercenary motives? No! 'tis out of pure friendship."

"But you must consider, that if I have this young girl upon my hands for five months, it would cost me much more than that sum."

"If it will render you a service, M. Rodolph, I will accept the hundred francs. But it is a famous prize in the lottery to have you in the house. I shall proclaim it from the roof, that you are the king of tenants. Hallo! a coach!—it must be the little lady of M. Bradamanti. She called yesterday. I did not get much of a glance at her; but now I will be slow in my answers, so as to see her thoroughly. I have also found out a plan for learning her name. You will see me work it, in a manner that will amuse you."

"No, no, Madame Pipelet: I care nothing for the name or the face of the lady," said Rodolph, going back to the extremity of the lodge.

"Madame!" exclaimed Anastasie, rushing

forward to meet the person who was entering; "where are you going, madame?"

"I am going to see M. Bradamanti," said the lady, perceptibly annoyed at the interruption.

"He is not at home."

"It is impossible! I was to meet him here."

"He is not in."

"You are mistaken."

"I am not at all mistaken," said the portress, placing herself skilfully in such a position as to command a view of the individual's features. "M. Bradamanti is out, certainly out, except for one lady."

"Well, then, I am that lady. You vex me: let me pass on."

"Your name, madame; and I shall know whether you are the lady M. Bradamanti expects. If you are not the person, you will have to go over my body before you can pass upstairs."

"Did he tell you my name?" asked the lady, with great surprise and anxiety.

"Yes, madame."

"What impudence!" muttered the stranger; and after a moment's hesitation, she added impatiently, in a low voice, as if she feared being overheard: "My name, madame, is the Countess d'Orbigny."

Rodolph shuddered: it was the name of the Marquise d'Harville's stepmother. Instead of any longer remaining in the dark, he moved forward, and, by the combined light of the lamp and the day, easily recognised the peculiar face which Clémence had described.

"Countess d'Orbigny," repeated Madame Pipelet; "that is the name which M. Bradamanti told me. You may go up."

And Anastasie added, in a triumphant tone, as she returned to the lodge: "Go a-head—she is in for it! I know her name—'tis d'Orbigny. Not a bad contrivance of mine: what do you think of it, M. Rodolph? But what ails you?—have you fallen into a brown study?"

"Has the lady been here once already to see M. Bradamanti?" asked Rodolph.

"Yes, yesterday. And as soon as she departed, M. Bradamanti went out, to engage, probably, a seat in the diligence for to-day. When he returned, he asked me to take his trunk to the office, for he would not trust it with that little scoundrel of a Tortillard."

"And do you know where M. Bradamanti is going?"

"To Normandy, by the way of Alençon."

Rodolph remembered that Aubiers, the estate of the Count d'Orbigny, was situated in Normandy, and he was convinced that the quack was going there for some infamous design.

"The departure of M. Bradamanti will disturb Mother Seraphin greatly. She is crazy to see him, and the doctor wished to avoid her, for he urged me strongly to conceal from her that he intended to start at six o'clock this evening, so that when she comes back she will find no one at home. I will improve the opportunity to speak to her about this young girl. By the way, what is her name?"

"Cecily."

"It is as if one should say Cecil, and put a *y* on to the end. Never mind; I must put a piece of paper into my snuff-box, in order to remember the name. Ceci—Ceci—Cecily. I have got it."

"Now I will go and see Mademoiselle Rigolette," said Rodolph, departing from the lodge; and with his mind absorbed with the purport of the visit of the Countess d'Orbigny to Polidori, he ascended to Rigolette's room.

CHAPTER II.

RIGOLETTE'S FIRST SORROW.

THE chamber of Rigolette displayed, as usual, its excessive neatness and order; the large silver watch, placed upon the mantelpiece in a box-wood stand, was indicating four o'clock; the severity of the cold having subsided, the economical mistress of the apartment had not deemed a fire in the stove at all necessary. A small space of blue sky could be with difficulty discerned through an irregular mass of garrets, chimneys, and roofs, which bounded the prospect upon the opposite side of the street. All at once, a wandering ray of the sun, as if it had strayed from its usual path, wound around the roofs of the tall houses, and coloured with dazzling purple the floor of the young girl's room. Near the window, Rigolette was seated at work. Her charming profile was relieved against the brilliancy of the glasses, like a pink cameo upon a red ground. Rays of light glanced upon her raven tresses, twisted behind her head, and tinged with an amber hue her industrious fingers, which plied the needle with such incomparable skill and dexterity. The long folds of her brown dress, on which the green apron was seen, fell partly over the rushes of her fauteuil, and her two little feet, always irreproachably shod, were supported upon a stool before her. As a rich seigneur, sometimes in a fit of caprice, amuses himself with hanging with splendid draperies the rude walls of a hovel, in the same manner, the brilliant rays of the setting sun illumined, with a thousand variegated lights, the little room of the grisette, converting the Persian curtains of grey and green into cloth of gold, polishing with unwonted lustre the walnut furniture, and adorning, with golden wire, the cages of her birds. But, in spite of this addition to the cheerfulness of the apartment, the two canaries fluttered about in an unusual state of disquietude, and, contrary to their usual habit, their tiny throats were closed; the melodious voice of their mistress was also hushed. Not one of the three would warble without the other. Rigolette's matin-song generally aroused that of her birds, who did not awake so early. Then commenced a conflict between clear, ringing, round, melodious, and silvery sounds, in which the birds had not invariably the advantage. Rigolette sang no more, because, for the first time in her life, the barb of sorrow had touched her bosom.

The sight of the Morels' misery had often affected her; but such pictures are too familiar to the poorer classes to produce any abiding impression. After having daily administered to the relief of these distressed beings—after shedding her tears over their misery—the young girl was at the same time afflicted and comforted: afflicted at the sight of their misery—comforted in affording it relief. It was not sorrow. The native cheerfulness of her spirit soon recovered its ascendancy, not from any want of sensibility, but because she was unable to resist the enlivening tendency of the comforts with which she was herself surrounded, contrasted with the wretched garret of the Morels. There was so little of selfishness in the aptitude of Rigolette to impression, that a train of reasoning of touching delicacy had induced the grisette to regard it as her special duty to assist those who were more

reduced than herself, that she might enjoy, without any scruple or hesitation, the comforts of her precarious and laborious existence; but which was a luxurious style of living compared with the frightful wretchedness of the lapidary.

"To sing without remorse, when your neighbours are miserable, you must have done all in your power to relieve them," was the *naive* sentiment of the excellent grisette.

Before informing the reader respecting the cause of Rigolette's first sorrow, we wish completely to relieve any suspicions he may have as to the perfect rectitude and virtue of Rigolette. We regret to be compelled to use that grave, pompous, solemn word *virtue*, which always seems to carry with it an idea of painful sacrifices, of severe struggles against vice, and austere reflections upon the design of things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette; she had neither studied nor reflected—she was a laughing, singing, busy being. The exact propriety of her conduct, as she had informed Rodolph, was due principally to the fact, that she never had *time* to fall in love. Cheerfulness, industry, order, gaiety, had defended, sustained, and, unknown to herself, had saved her. The moral worth of such a character may be regarded as of trifling value; but who cares for the cause, so long as the effect exists? Who cares in which direction the roots of a plant run, provided its foliage is pure, luxuriant, beautiful, and fragrant?

In speaking of utopias, or the encouragements which society should extend to poor and humble artisans, eminent for their integrity and social elevation, we alluded to an *espionage* over virtue, as one of the projects of the Emperor. Let us suppose the mighty idea of that great mind carried into actual operation. Suppose one of the exemplary philanthropists, commissioned by him to search after excellence, should discover Rigolette. Abandoned without any means of sustenance, with no friendly lips to counsel her, exposed to all the dangers of poverty, to all the temptations with which the path of youth and beauty is beset—the untainted purity of the charming girl, which had triumphed over so many dangers; her industry, which none of the allurements of ease and indulgence could overcome; her rectitude, which had survived every temptation, would be an illustrious example and an instructive lesson. Would she not deserve, not merely a passing alms or a trifling reward, but some touching words of approbation and encouragement, which would give to her the consciousness of her own worth, which would elevate her in her own estimation, which would exert a binding power upon her for the future? She will be sensible that she is watched with an eye of solicitude and sympathy, in the dangerous path which she treads with so much courage and serenity. She will be sustained by the knowledge, that if the want of work or sickness shall threaten to cut short that busy life, which depends entirely upon labour, that some trifling aid, due to her past merits, will be granted her.

People will doubtless cavil at the difficulty of subjecting the deserving to this protecting care.

It seems to us that this problem has been already solved.

Has not society created a rigid *surveillance* of police from time to time, which is very useful in controlling those who are notorious for their detestable life of turpitude? Why should not society also exercise a *surveillance* for the purposes of exalted charity?

But let us quit these high utopian speculations, and return to the cause of the first sorrow of Rigolette. With the exception of Germain, who was an upright and sedate youth, the other neighbours of the grisette had mistaken her characteristic familiarity and neighbourly kindness for significant hints; but they had been compelled to admit, with as much surprise as chagrin, that they could only find in Rigolette an interesting and cheerful companion in their moments of leisure, and a serviceable neighbour. Their disappointment, however, soon yielded to the charming humour and gaiety of the grisette; and, as she had very truly remarked to Rodolph, her neighbours were proud to have their arm taken on Sundays by a beautiful girl, who was an honour to them in many respects, and who was not half so expensive as their ordinary amusements, while her presence and gentility were worth double the price. Besides, the affectionate girl was so easily contented, that, on those days when money was not very plentiful, she would dine cheerfully upon a hard crumpet, which she would masticate with all the strength of her small, white teeth, and would afterwards promenade on the boulevards or in the streets.

If our readers feel any sympathy with Rigolette, they will agree that it would have been both foolish and cruel to have refused, at least once a week, the humble demands of so kind a creature; and who, having no right to be jealous, never prevented her companions from consoling themselves for her severity, with beauties that were kindlier disposed. François Germain alone had never founded a foolish hope upon the familiarity of the young girl. Either from a pure instinct or native delicacy, he saw from the first day all that there was agreeable in the society which Rigolette offered him. What was destined to be, actually took place: Germain fell desperately in love with his neighbour, without daring to breathe one word respecting it. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, when convinced of the folly of their expectations, resorted to other sources of solace, without losing their regard for their neighbour, Germain had delightfully enjoyed his intimacy with the young girl, and the pleasure afforded by her society on Sundays and every other evening that he was disengaged. During these long hours, Rigolette was always gay and merry, and Germain affectionate, serious, and attentive, and often slightly melancholy. This sadness was his only disadvantage, for his manners, being naturally refined, did not suffer by comparison with the ridiculous pretensions of M. Giraudeau, the travelling clerk, or with the boisterous eccentricities of Cabrion; but Giraudeau, by his excessive loquacity, and the painter, by his no less excessive hilarity, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentlemanly gravity rather awed his lively neighbour.

Rigolette had never, even until this period, evinced any partiality for either of her three lovers; but, with an excellent judgment, she soon discovered that Germain combined all the qualities which would render any reasonable woman happy.

With these observations, we will now state why Rigolette was sorrowful, and why neither she nor her birds sung. Her full and blooming face was somewhat pale; her large, black eyes, usually sparkling with fun and with life, were now slightly shaded; her features indicated unusual fatigue; she had toiled the greater part of the preceding night. From time to time she cast

a sorrowful glance upon a letter, which lay open upon the table near her, which letter had just been addressed to her by Germain, and contained what follows:—

"Prison of the Conciergerie.

"Mademoiselle,—That I write from this place is sufficient to inform you of the extent of my misfortune. I am imprisoned as a thief. I am culpable in the eyes of all the world, and yet I dare write to you.

"Were I to believe that you regarded me as criminal and degraded, my lot would indeed be a terrible one. I pray you not to condemn me until you have read this letter. If you do, this last blow will crush me for ever.

"Listen to my tale.

"I have not been residing, for some time back, in the Rue du Temple; but I learned, through poor Louise, that the Morel family, in which you and I are so deeply interested, has endured misery upon misery. Alas! my pity for these poor people has ruined me! I do not repent of it, but I deplore the cruel fate which brings me here.

"Yesterday, I remained till a late hour at the house of M. Ferrand, busied with some writings which were to be finished in haste. There was a bureau in the room where I wrote, and in this bureau my employer was in the habit of locking up his daily work. On this evening he seemed unquiet and agitated; he said to me: 'You are not to go away until these documents are finished; you will put them into the bureau—here is the key.' With these words he departed.

"My work being finished, I opened the drawer for the purpose of locking it up there. My eyes mechanically rested upon an open letter, in which I read the name of Jerôme Morel, the lapidary.

"Seeing that the contents were aimed against this unfortunate man, I confess I had the imprudence to read the letter from beginning to end! I thus found that on the morrow the artisan was to be arrested for a bill of exchange involving one thousand three hundred francs, on behalf of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, made him prisoner.

"This warrant proceeded from my employer's agent. I knew the situation of the Morel family well enough to perceive what a terrible shock they would sustain by the imprisonment of their sole support. My grief was as great as my indignation. Unfortunately, I observed in the same drawer an open box, containing gold to the amount of two thousand francs. At this moment, I heard Louise going up-stairs; without reflecting on the grave nature of my crime, and profiting by the opportunity which chance offered me, I took one thousand three hundred francs. Waiting for Louise in the passage, I brought her the money in my hand, saying: 'To-morrow your father is to be arrested at an early hour, for the sum of one thousand three hundred francs: take this—save him—but beware against telling that the money was given you by me. M. Ferrand is a villain.'

"You see, mademoiselle, my intention was good, but my conduct was guilty. I conceal nothing from you. Now hear my excuse.

"By a long course of economy, I had realized and deposited with a banker, the sum of fifteen hundred francs. Eight days were to elapse before the arrival of the term contained in the bond, and then the funds were to be at my disposal, provided I did not wish to let them remain with him.

"I really possessed, therefore, more than I took from the notary. I might have had my fifteen hundred francs next day, but the banker's cashier did not arrive at his employer's house until noon, and Morel was to be arrested at dawn of day. I was obliged, then, to take this money, in order to make the payment in time: otherwise, although I might, indeed, procure his liberation, yet in the eyes of his wife he would have been degraded by arrest, and this last blow would kill her. Besides, the lapidary would still have been compelled to pay the expense of his arrest; and this was a considerable sum. You comprehend, do you not? Would not all these calamities have been brought on, if I had not taken the thirteen hundred francs, which I believed myself able to replace in the bureau next morning, before M. Ferrand could miss them? Unhappily, I was deceived!

"I left M. Ferrand's house, no longer disturbed by indignation or affected piety. I reflected entirely on the danger of my position; then a thousand fears came across me. I knew the notary's severity; he might, after my departure, return to examine his bureau, and observe the theft; for in his eyes, and in the eyes of all, *it is a theft*.

"These ideas deprived me of self-command. Although it was late, I ran to the banker's to beseech him to give me my money without a moment's delay. I shall explain the motive, thought I, for this extraordinary demand; I shall return immediately to M. Ferrand's, and replace the money.

"The banker, by a fatal chance, was gone for two days to Belleville, to a country-house which he was surrounding with plantations. I waited for the day with increasing anguish; at length, I arrived at Belleville. Everything conspired against me; the banker had just returned to Paris. I ran thither; I obtained my money; I present myself at M. Ferrand's: all is discovered!

"But this is only one part of my misfortunes; the notary now accuses me of having stolen *fifteen* thousand francs in bank-bills, which were, says he, in the drawer of the bureau, with the *two* thousand francs in gold. This is a false accusation, an infamous lie! I confess myself guilty of the first appropriation, but by all that in the world is sacred, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I did not see a single bank-bill in the drawer. He had only two thousand francs in gold, of which I took thirteen hundred.

"Such is the truth, mademoiselle; I am under a heavy accusation, and yet, I affirm that you ought to believe me incapable of lying. But do you really place confidence in me? Alas! as M. Ferrand said to me: 'He who has stolen a small sum can steal a greater, and his word deserves no confidence.'

"I have always observed that you are kind and devoted to the unhappy, Rigolette; and I know you to be so candid and so true, that you will follow the best dictates of your heart, and appreciate, I hope, the truth of my statements. I ask nothing more. Believe me, and you will find as much in my lot to pity, as you will find in my conduct to blame; for, I repeat it, my intention was good: I have been ruined by circumstances which it was impossible to foresee.

"Ah! Rigolette, I am very wretched. If you could know what sort of people surround me,

and in what sort of company I am compelled to live until my trial, you would indeed compassionate my case.

"Yesterday, I was conducted into a place called the depôt of the prefecture of police. I have no words to describe to you what I saw on ascending a dark stair. I arrived before an iron gate, which was opened to receive me, and shut immediately after my admission. I was so confused, that at first I did not distinguish anything. A warm, disagreeable air blew into my face; I heard a great noise of voices, mingled here and there with ominous laughter, angry words, and vulgar songs. I remained at the gate motionless, contemplating the horrible menagerie before me, daring neither to advance nor to raise my eyes, and believing that the eyes of the whole world were fixed upon me. But they, in truth, took no notice of me. All sorts of prisoners, small and great, were there huddled together; I dared at length to raise my head. Heaven! what fearful figures! what rags! what filth! All the marks of misery and vice were there. There were forty or fifty seated, some on settees, some on benches built in the wall—vagabonds, thieves, assassins; in short, all who had been arrested in the night or during the day. When they observed me, I enjoyed a sad consolation in finding that they did not recognise me as one of themselves. Some looked at me with an insolent and contemptuous air; then they began to speak to one another in a low voice, and in a hideous dialect which I did not understand. By-and-by, the boldest among them came and struck me on the shoulder, demanding my money to pay for my introduction.

"I gave him several pieces of money, hoping by this means to purchase repose. This did not satisfy them; they wished to take advantage of me: I resisted. Several heaped upon me threats and abuse. They all seemed disposed to fall upon me; then, fortunately, the jailor, attracted by the noise, came to my assistance. I complained to him. He obliged them to return me my money, and informed me that, if I wished, I should be conducted, for a moderate sum, to a place called the *pistole*, where I might enjoy the comfort of solitude. I accepted, with thanks, and left the bandits pouring forth threats for the future. "We shall find him again," said they. I left them.

"The jailor led me to a cell, where I passed the rest of the night.

"It is in that cell that I write to you this morning, Rigolette; soon, after being interrogated, I shall be conducted to another prison called La Force, where I am afraid I shall find several of my companions from the depôt.

"The jailor, moved by my misery and my tears, promised to carry this letter to you, although such a compliance with my wishes might perhaps subject him to severe punishment.

"I am now about to ask, Rigolette, a last favour, for the sake of our long friendship, if indeed you do not now blush to acknowledge such a friendship. In case you should be disposed to accede to my request, here are my instructions: You will receive with this letter a small key, and a word for the porter of the house in which I resided, Boulevard Saint-Denis, No. 11. I wish to dispose of all my effects, and the porter will execute your orders. He will conduct you to my chamber. You will have the goodness to open my secretary with the key which I send you. You will find a large wrapper inclosing various papers, which I pray you to keep for me; one of them was intended for yourself, as you may see by the address. There are others which have been written concerning you, and in happier days. Do not be annoyed by them: you ought never to have seen them.

"I also beg you to accept the small sum of money which is in this package, also the satin scarf, containing a little cravat of orange silk, which you wore at our last Sunday walks, and which you gave me when I left you in the Rue du Temple. I wish, in short, that all my moveables should be sold, with the exception of some linen, which you will send to La Force. Acquitted or condemned, I shall of course be disgraced, and obliged to leave Paris. Whither shall I go? What shall my resources be? God only knows.

"Madame Bouvard, the shopkeeper at the Temple, who has already bought and sold several things for me, will take charge of the whole; this arrangement will spare you much embarrassment, for I know well that your time is valuable.

"I have paid my rent in advance, and I beg you therefore merely to give a trifle to the porter. Pardon me, Rigolette, for troubling you with these details, but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare address myself.

"I would have requested one of M. Ferrand's clerks to do me this service. I am intimate with him, but I can hardly trust his discretion with regard to certain papers, several of which refer to yourself, as I have told you; many others bear upon the sad events of my past life.

"Ah! believe me, Rigolette, if you comply with my request, this last proof of your former affection will be my only consolation in the great calamity which weighs upon me; in spite of myself, I hope that you will not refuse me.

"I also crave permission to write to you sometimes; it will be so refreshing to me, such a precious privelege to be able to pour into a benevolent and warm heart, the sadness which oppresses me.

"Alas! I am alone in the world; no one takes an interest in me! This feeling was scarcely tolerable formerly—judge what it must be now.

"And yet I am honest, and I have the consciousness of never having injured a single individual; of having, always, even at the peril of my life, shown my hatred of that which is evil, as you may perceive by the papers which I request you to preserve, and which you may read. But when I shall tell this, who will believe me? M. Ferrand is respected by all the world; his reputation as an honest man has been long established; he has a just cause for reproaching me—he will crush me—and I resign myself beforehand to my lot. In short, Rigolette, if you believe me, you will have, I hope, no contempt for me; you will pity me, and you will sometimes think of your sincere friend; and if I am sometimes a source of very deep sorrow to you, perhaps you will extend your generosity so far as to come some day, some Sunday—alas! what recollections this word brings up!—perhaps you will come some Sunday and speak to me at my prison.

"But no! no! *you* see me again in such a place! Yet you are so good that ——

"I am obliged to interrupt this letter, and to send it away, unfinished as it is, with the key, and the small note for the porter, which I proceed to write, in haste. Do not drive me away

with disdain: my only hope is in you—in you alone!

"FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

"P. S. If you reply, address your letter to the prison of La Force."

We now see the cause of Rigolette's first disappointment.

Her genuine heart was deeply moved by a misfortune of which, till then, she had not entertained the least idea. Without at all enquiring into the matter, she yielded entire credit to the story of Germain, the unfortunate son of the Schoolmaster.

Not very rigourous in her exactions, she found that her old neighbour exaggerated his crime enormously. To save the unhappy father of a family, he had taken a sum which he knew he could replace. Such an action, in the eyes of the grisette, was generous rather than criminal.

By one of those inconsistencies natural to women—above all, to women of her class—this young girl who, until then, had felt towards Germain only as she had felt towards her other neighbours, only the spirit of joyous and cordial friendship, now gave him a decided preference. As soon as she knew that he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, she forgot his former rivals.

With Rigolette, this was not even yet love. It was an affection, lively, sincere, full of commiseration and determined devotion; a sentiment very new to her, especially as it was associated with the most melancholy thoughts.

Such was Rigolette's position, such were her ideas, when Rodolph entered her chamber, after first discreetly knocking at her door.

"Good day, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette. "I do not disturb you?"

"Not at all, neighbour; on the contrary, I am very glad to see you, for I have been deeply grieved recently."

"Indeed! I find you pale; you appear to have been weeping?"

"I believe that I have wept; and it has not been without a cause. Poor Germain! Wait, listen!" and Rigolette handed to Rodolph the prisoner's letter. "Oh! this is enough to stir the heart! You have told me that you are interested in him; now is the time to show it," added she, while Rodolph listened attentively. "This villain, M. Ferrand, ought to be exposed before the world. Lately, he was the enemy of Louise; now he is plotting against Germain. Oh! I am not wicked, but if some calamity should happen to the notary, I would be contented! To accuse so honest a young man of having stolen fifteen thousand francs! Germain! him! One so honest, so mild, so sad! We cannot but pity him. Heavens! among all those wretches! in prison! Ah! M. Rodolph, now I begin to see that everything in life is not rose-coloured!"

"And what do you intend to do, neighbour?"

"What do I mean to do? Of course all that Germain asks me to do, and that as soon as possible. I should already have been on my way, were it not for this work which must be finished, and which I am just about to carry to the Rue Saint-Honoré, as I go to Germain's room, to find the papers of which he speaks. I have passed part of the night in working, in order to gain a few hours. I have a great many things to do, besides my work, which must be done gradually; first, Madame Morel wishes me to see Louise, in her prison. This may, perhaps, be very difficult; nevertheless, I shall attempt it. Unhappily, I know no one to whom I can make application."

"I have thought of that."

"You, my neighbour!"

"Here is a note of permission."

"How happy! could you not procure me one to the prison of the unfortunate Germain? It would give him such pleasure."

"I shall give you the means of seeing Germain, also."

"Oh! thanks, M. Rodolph."

"Will you not be afraid to go to the prison?"

"Certainly, my heart will beat very fast the first time; but it is no more than just. When Germain was happy, did I not find him always ready to meet all my wishes? To take me to the shows, or to walk, to read to me in the evening, to assist me in arranging my flowers, and in waxing my chamber? Well, now that he is in trouble, it is my turn. A poor little mouse like me cannot do much—I know it; but all I *can* do, I *will* do: he may depend upon that. He shall see that I am his friend. M. Rodolph, there is one thing that distresses me; it is his want of confidence in me: to believe me capable of treating him with contempt! Me! I ask you for what? This avaricious old notary accuses him of having stolen; what is that to me? I do not believe it. Does not Germain's letter prove clearly that he is innocent? I could not have believed him guilty. One needs only see and know him, to be satisfied that he is incapable of villainy. The man must be as wicked as M. Ferrand who believes such obvious falsehoods."

"Bravo! neighbour; I am delighted to observe your indignation."

"Oh! I wish I were a man, that I might go to this notary, and say to him: 'Ah! you maintain that Germain is a thief. Well, take that, you old liar! he will never steal that from you. There! there! there!' and I would beat him to a jelly!"

"You have a very expeditious method of obtaining justice," said Rodolph, smiling at Rigolette's animation.

"It is really revolting to think of the old rascal; and as Germain says in his letter, all the world will be in favour of his patron, and against him, because his patron is rich and respected, while Germain is only a poor, friendless young man. Unless you come to his assistance, M. Rodolph, you who know so many benevolent persons—can nothing be done?"

"He must await his trial. Once acquitted, as I know he will be, numerous proofs of interest will be shown him, I assure you. But listen, my neighbour; I know, by experience, that I can reckon upon your discretion."

"Oh! yes, M. Rodolph, I have never been a tell-tale."

"Well, none must know anything about the matter, and Germain himself must not know that his friends are working in his behalf—for he has friends."

"Indeed!"

"Very powerful and devoted friends."

"Oh! it would give him so much courage to know it!"

"Doubtless; but perhaps he could not keep the secret. Then M. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, and as he is very adroit, it would be difficult to reach him. This would be provoking, for not only must Germain's inno-

cence be proclaimed, but his calumniator must be unmasked."

"I understand you, M. Rodolph."

"I may say the same with regard to Louise. I have brought you this note of permission to see her also, that you may beseech her not to reveal to a single individual what she related to me. She will understand what I mean."

"That is sufficient, M. Rodolph."

"In a word, let Louise beware against complaining in her prison of her master's wickedness; this is very important. But she must conceal nothing from an advocate who will go at my request to consult with her about the defence; tell her to attend to all this particularly."

"Be easy, my neighbour, I shall forget nothing—I have a good memory. But, speaking of goodness, it is you who are good and generous. When any one is in trouble, you find it out immediately."

"I have told you, neighbour, that I am only a poor commission-merchant; when I find, anywhere around me, deserving persons who require protection, I inform benevolent persons regarding them; they have confidence in me, and succour the unfortunate. This is the whole secret."

"And where do you lodge, now that you have given your room to Morel?"

"I am at ready-furnished lodgings."

"Oh! how I should detest it! To live where all the world has lived, is as if all the world had been living with you."

"I am there only at night, and then ——"

"I understand, that is less disagreeable, M. Rodolph. My companion renders me *so* happy, I have settled down in a life of tranquillity, and I did not dream that I could ever be unhappy; still you see! No, I cannot express to you the shock which Germain's misfortune occasioned me. It's true, I have seen the Morels and others who have suffered greatly: but misery is misery—poor people must expect it; it does not take them by surprise, and they help one another as they can. It happens to one to-day, to-morrow to another. With gaiety and a good heart, one manages to rub on. But to see a good and honest young man, who has been one's friend so long, to see him accused of theft, and lodged in prison pell-mell with robbers! Oh! M. Rodolph, I have not strength to bear up against that: that is a misfortune which I had never thought of; it overcomes me quite."

And Rigolette's large eyes were drowned in tears.

"Courage, courage! your gaiety will return when your friend is acquitted."

"Oh! there can be no doubt that he will be acquitted—he will only have to read to the judges the letter which he wrote to me; that will be quite enough—will it not, M. Rodolph?"

"Doubtless; that simple and touching letter has every character of truth about it: you must let me take a copy of it; it is necessary to Germain's defence."

"Certainly, M. Rodolph. If my writing were not so horrible a scrawl, notwithstanding the lessons Germain gave me, I would offer to copy it—but my writing is so coarse, so crooked, and then I should make so many, many mistakes."

"I will ask you to trust me with the letter only till to-morrow."

"There it is, my neighbour; but you will take great care of it, will you not? I burned all the love-letters which M. Cabrion and M. Giraudeau used to write me at the beginning of our acquaintance, with doves and flaming hearts painted at the top of the page, when they thought I should listen to their nonsense; but this letter, from poor Germain, I shall take great care of, and any other too which he may write to me. Besides that, his asking me those little services is a proof in my favour. Is it not, M. Rodolph?"

"Without doubt; it proves you are the best little friend in the world. But, now I think of it, instead of your going alone to Germain's, would it not be better that I should accompany you?"

"With pleasure, my good neighbour. It is getting dark, and I would rather not be running about the streets alone; besides which, I must carry home some work to a house near the Palais Royal. But it would, perhaps, fatigue and incommode you to go so far."

"Not at all: we will take a hackney-coach."

"Really! Oh! if I were not so low-spirited, how pleased I should be to ride in a coach. And I must truly be low-spirited, for this is the first day since I have been here, that I have passed without singing. My birds are quite struck dumb with it, poor little things; they can't think what it means. *Father Cretu* sang two or three times, to entice me on. I tried a little, but it was useless. In about a minute, I began to cry again: *Ramonette* then began; but I could not get out a note."

"*Father Cretu? Ramonette?* What curious names you have given your birds."

"My birds, d'ye see, M. Rodolph, are the charm of my solitude. They are my best friends. I gave them the names of good people who rendered my childhood so happy, and who were also my best friends; and, in order to finish the comparison, Father Cretu and Ramonette were always gay, and sang as merrily as the birds of heaven."

"Ah! yes, now I recollect; these are the names of the good people who adopted you."

"Yes, neighbour. I know it is ridiculous to give such names to birds; but that is my affair. But this is another circumstance which proves that Germain has an excellent heart."

"In what way?"

"I will tell you. Both M. Giraudeau and M. Cabrion—and M. Cabrion particularly—were always joking me about the names I had given my birds. To call a canary Father Cretu—only think! M. Cabrion could not comprehend it; and then he would teaze me about it for an hour together. 'If it were a cock,' said he, 'then it would be all very well to call it Cretu. And then you call the hen Ramonette: that puts one in mind of *ramoneur* (a chimney-sweep.) At last I got so out of humour with him, that for two Sundays I would not walk out with him, to teach him better manners; and I told him, very seriously, that if he began his jokes again, which annoyed me very much, I would never again keep company with him."

"What a courageous resolution!"

"It vexed me very much, I can tell you, M. Rodolph; I, who looked forward to my Sunday walks with such pleasure: my heart swelled almost to bursting, to be obliged to remain at home, alone—and such fine weather, too! But never mind: I preferred rather to sacrifice my Sundays, than to hear M. Cabrion mocking those I respected. After that, had it not been for the remembrance I attached to them, I should have preferred calling my birds by other names. See,

now, M. Rodolph, there was one name that I should have delighted in—that of *Colibri*. Well; I did not do so, because I will never call any birds I have by other names than *Cretu* and *Ramonette*, for it would seem to me that I was forgetting, was sacrificing, my adopted parents. Don't you think so, M. Rodolph?"

"You are right—perfectly right. But Germain, he did not make a joke of these names, did he?"

"On the contrary—excepting the first time that he heard them, when, like everybody else, he thought them very droll: that was very natural; but when I explained my reasons for so calling them—and I had explained them, also, to M. Cabrion—tears came into his eyes. From that day, I said to myself, 'M. Germain has a good heart: what a pity 'tis that he should be so sad.' What bad luck it has brought me, M. Rodolph, to have reproached him for his gloom. I could not then comprehend why any one should be sad. But now my parcel is made up—my work ready to carry home. Will you give me my shawl, neighbour? It isn't cold enough to bear a cloak, is it?"

"We shall take a coach; and I will bring you home again."

"Ah! that's true: we shall go there and return so much the quicker. It will be so much time saved."

"But, now I think of it, how will you manage? With these visits to the prison, your work will get behindhand."

"Not at all, not at all: I have made my calculation. First, I have my Sundays free: I will then go and see Louise and Germain. It will be a walk, and during the walk, I will go once or twice to the prison. Each of these visits will take me about three hours, will it not? Well, in order to earn enough to make me comfortable, I will work an hour longer every day. Instead of going to bed at eleven, I will sit up till twelve o'clock. This will be a clear gain of the seven or eight hours a week, which I shall lose in seeing Louise and Germain. You see I am richer than I appeared to be," added Rigolette, smiling.

"But do you not fear you will fatigue yourself too much?"

"Bah! I shall soon get used to it. Use is everything. And then, it cannot last for ever."

"Here's your shawl, neighbour—I will not be so indiscreet as I was yesterday, my lips shall not come so near your charming neck."

"Ah! neighbour, yesterday we might laugh—but to-day, it is quite another thing—take care you do not prick me."

"There, now—the pin is crooked."

"Well! take another, you will find one on the pin-cushion. Ah! I had forgotten, will you be very obliging, neighbour?"

"Command me, neighbour."

"Make me a good pen, very broad-nibbed—that on my return I may write to that poor Germain, and tell him his commissions are executed. He will have my letter early to-morrow morning: it will be a treat for him when he wakes."

"Where are your pens?"

"There, on the table; the pen-knife is in the drawer—stop a moment, I will light a candle, for it is getting dark!"

"I should not be well able to mend your pen without it."

"Right, and then I have to tie on my cap."

Rigolette took a lucifer match, and lit a wax candle, which was standing in a brightly-polished little candlestick.

"The deuce! a wax candle, neighbour? What extravagance!"

"The little that I burn may cost a very trifle more than tallow candles, but it is so much cleaner."

"A very trifle more, do you say?"

"Certainly! I buy these wax candle ends by the pound, and half-a-pound lasts me a month."

"But," said Rodolph, carefully mending a pen, while the grisette tied on her cap before a looking-glass, "I do not see that you have made any preparations for dinner?"

"I am not in the least hungry. I took a cup of milk this morning—I shall take another to-night, with a little bread, and that will be quite enough for me."

"Perhaps, when we return from Germain's house, you will without ceremony come and dine with me."

"I thank you, neighbour, but my heart is too full; another time I will, with pleasure—I'll tell you when it shall be—the evening before Germain is to come out of prison. I invite myself, and after dinner you shall take me to the theatre. Shall it be so?"

"Agreed; and believe me, neighbour, I will not forget the engagement. But why refuse me to-day?"

"Why, M. Rodolph, I should be such stupid company for you, and besides it would take up too much time. I ought not to be idle at such a moment as this, nor lose a quarter of an hour improperly."

"Well, then, I give up all hope for to-day."

"Stay—take my parcel, neighbour; go before, and I will look the door."

"Here is a capital pen; now give me your parcel."

"Take care not to tumble it—it is *poult de soie*, and it will crease; hold it in your hand—there, so—lightly—that's right. Now, go on; I will light you down stairs."

Rodolph then descended the stairs, preceded by Rigolette.

At the moment the two neighbours were passing before the porter's lodge, they saw M. Pipelet, who, with outstretched arms, was advancing towards them from the end of the alley. In one hand he held the sign-board, which announced that he was entering into *friendly business* with Cabrion; in the other, the portrait of the wicked painter.

Alfred's despair was so overpowering, that his chin fell upon his chest, and all that was to be seen of him, was the immense crown of his drum-like hat.

Seeing him advance in this manner, with his head down, towards Rodolph and Rigolette, he might have been mistaken for a ram, or a brave Breton champion preparing for combat.

Anastasie quickly presented herself at the door of her lodge, and on seeing her husband, cried out: "Well, old dear, you have got back! What did the commissary say to you? But take care, Alfred, you are poking against my king of lodgers—who is it that has put your eyes out? Pardon, M. Rodolph—it is that rascal Cabrion, who stupefies him more and more; he will, as sure as fate, make quite an ass of him—poor old beloved! Alfred! why don't you speak, then?"

On hearing this voice, so dear to his heart, M. Pipelet raised his head: his features were impressed with gloomy irony.

"What did the commissary say to you?" rejoined Anastasie.

"Anastasie, we must gather together the little we possess, press our friends to our hearts, pack up our trunks, and expatriate ourselves—from France—my lovely France! for being now certain of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere."

"How! the commissary?"

"The commissary!" shouted M. Pipelet, with violent indignation, "the commissary!—he laughed in my face."

"Laughed in your face? A man of your age, with so respectable an air, that you would appear as stupid as a goose, if your virtues were not well known."

"Well! notwithstanding all that, after I had respectfully laid before him the accumulated mass of injuries and wrongs inflicted upon me by that infernal Cabrion, this magistrate, having looked for a while at my justificatory documents, the sign-board and the portrait I had taken with me, laughing all the while—yes, I say laughing, and I will even venture emphatically to affirm, laughing indecently—replied: 'My good man, this Cabrion seems to be a regular scapegrace, a knave who is fond of practical jokes: pay no attention to his tricks. I very seriously advise you merely to laugh at them, for really they are worthy of it.' 'Laugh at them, sir?' cried I, 'laugh at them! while I am devoured by vexation—while this wretch embitters my existence? He will drive me mad! I demand that he be forthwith imprisoned—that he be exiled, at all events, from our street.' At these words the commissary smiled, and most obligingly showed me the door—I comprehended the full force of this gesture of the magistrate, and here I am."

"Magistrate of nothing at all!" cried Madame Pipelet.

"All is over, my Anastasie—all is over now; even hope has abandoned me; justice and France are strangers; I am atrociously sacrificed!" and, by way of peroration, M. Pipelet pitched the sign-board and the portrait to the farther end of the alley.

Rodolph and Rigolette had, in the shade, smiled a little at the despair of M. Pipelet.

After having addressed a few words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasie was doing her best to pacify, the *king of tenants* quitted the house in the Rue du Temple, with Rigolette, and they both got into a coach and went to François Germain's house.

CHAPTER III.

THE WILL.

François Germain lived at No. 11, on the Boulevard Saint-Denis. We will remind our readers, who have no doubt forgotten it, that Madame Mathieu, the diamond broker, lodged in the same house.

During the long time consumed in going from the Rue du Temple to the Rue St. Honoré—where the dress-maker lived, to whom Rigolette wished in the first place to deliver her work—Rodolph had the opportunity of appreciating still further the excellent disposition of the young girl. Like all instinctively good and devoted characters, she had no perception of the delicacy and generosity of her conductor, which appeared to be perfectly natural. Nothing could have been more easy to Rodolph than to have liberally secured the present and future comfort of Rigolette, and thus have given her the opportunity of going charitably to console Louise and Germain, without being obliged to calculate the *time* which these visits kept her from work, her only resource; but the prince feared to lessen the merit due to the devoted friendship of the grisette, by rendering her task more easy—having, at the same time, determined upon rewarding the rare and charming qualities he had discovered in her, he wished to follow to its close this new and interesting trial.

It is hardly necessary to say, that, in the event of the young girl's health being in the slightest degree impaired by the increase of work she had so courageously imposed upon herself, in order to consecrate a few hours every week to the daughter of the lapidary and the son of the Schoolmaster, Rodolph would have instantly hastened to assist his *protegé*.

It was with feelings of delight and wonder that he studied a character so naturally happy, and so little prone to sorrow, that even under present affliction a ray of liveliness would every now and then break forth.

In about an hour after leaving the Rue Saint-Honoré, the coach stopped before a small but decent-looking house on the Boulevard Saint-Denis.

Rodolph assisted Rigolette to alight: she then went into the porter's lodge, and told him of Germain's intentions, not forgetting the present he had promised him. Thanks to his amiability of character, the Schoolmaster's son was beloved by everybody. M. Pipelet's brother porter was alarmed, on being apprised that the house was about to lose so good and quiet a lodger—such were his expressions.

The grisette, having borrowed a light, rejoined her companion; the porter was to follow shortly after, to receive her further instructions.

Germain's room was on the fourth story. When they reached the door, Rigolette said to Rodolph, giving him the key: "Take this, neighbour, and open the door, for my hand trembles so much. I know you will laugh at me; but when I think that Germain will perhaps never return here, it appears to me that I am entering the chamber of the dead."

"Do not let such ideas afflict you, neighbour; you should have more sense."

"I know that I am wrong, but I cannot help it;" and she wiped away a tear.

Without being so much moved as his companion, Rodolph nevertheless experienced a painful feeling on entering this modest retreat.

Knowing with what detestable pertinacity the accomplices of the Schoolmaster had beset, and pursued, and perhaps still continued to pursue Germain, he felt that the unfortunate young man must have passed many unhappy hours in the solitude of this chamber.

Rigolette placed the light upon the table. Nothing could be plainer than the furniture of the room. It consisted of a cot, a chest of drawers, a walnut secretary, four straw chairs, a table, and white cotton curtains before the windows and the alcove; the only ornament upon the chimney-piece, was a water-bottle and a glass.

From the bed being pressed down, without being in a state of disorder, it was apparent that

Germain must have thrown himself upon it, without taking off his clothes, during the night that preceded his arrest.

"Poor boy!" said Rigolette, sorrowfully, examining with interest everything about the room, "it is easy to perceive that I am no longer his neighbour. It is orderly, but it is not neat and clean: everything is full of dust; the curtains are smoked, the windows are dirty, the floor is not waxed. What a difference! in the Rue du Temple, the room is not handsomer, but it is much more lively, because everything is cleanly and bright, as in mine."

"That was because you were there, to give him your advice."

"But only see!" cried Rigolette, pointing to the cot; "he did not go to bed the other night, he was so agitated. And look at this handkerchief, which he has left—it has been wet through with tears—one can easily see that;" and taking it she added: "Germain kept a little orange-coloured silk cravat of mine, which I gave him when we were happy; I will keep this handkerchief in remembrance of his misfortunes. I am sure he will not be angry that I do so."

"On the contrary, this proof of your affection will much please him."

"But now let us think of more important matters. I will presently make a parcel of the linen I shall find in the drawers, which I will carry with me to the prison. To-morrow, I will send Madame Bouvard here, and she will arrange the rest. I will, first of all, however, open the secretary, and take out the papers and money, which Germain begs me to take care of for him."

"Now I recollect," said Rodolph, "Louise Morel gave me, yesterday, the thirteen hundred francs in gold which she received from Germain, to settle her father's debt, which I had paid before. I have the money: it belongs to Germain, as he has repaid the notary. I will give it to you, and you will add it to that which you are to keep for him."

"As you please, M. Rodolph. I should, however, rather not have so large a sum of money at my lodgings; there are so many thieves about. The papers no one would think of stealing—there is no fear of them; but money—it might be dangerous."

"You are perhaps right, my good neighbour: shall I take care of it? Should Germain be in want of anything, you can let me know it instantly. I will leave you my address, and I can send you what he may require."

"Thanks, neighbour; I should not have dared to ask you to render us that service. That will be much better; and I will give you whatever the furniture may sell for. Now let us see these papers," said the young girl, opening several drawers. "Ah! here they are, most probably. Here is a large packet. Oh, heavens! look here, M. Rodolph! How melancholy it makes one to see what he has written here!" and she read with much emotion: "'*In the event of my dying by violent means, or otherwise, I beg the person who may open this secretary, to carry these papers to Mademoiselle Rigolette, seamstress, No. 17, Rue du Temple.*'"

"May I break the seal of this envelope, M. Rodolph?"

"Certainly; for has not Germain informed you, that among these papers is a letter particularly addressed to you?"

"Rigolette broke the seal. It inclosed several papers; one of them bore this superscription: "*To Mademoiselle Rigolette,*" and contained these words: "Mademoiselle, when you read this letter, I shall have ceased to exist. If, as I fear, I die by violent means, from falling into an ambuscade like that I lately escaped from, the information contained in the paper on which is written, '*Notes on my Life,*' may perhaps afford some clue by which my assassins ——"

"Ah! M. Rodolph," exclaimed Rigolette, discontinuing to read, "I am no longer surprised at his being so gloomy. Poor Germain! always tormented by such horrible ideas."

"Yes, he must have been much afflicted; but, believe me, his worst days are past."

"Alas! I pray it may be so, M. Rodolph; but to be in prison, accused of theft!"

"Be satisfied: his innocence once acknowledged, instead of falling back into seclusion, he will find friends; first, yourself, and then a well-beloved mother, from whom he has been separated since his infancy."

"His mother! has he still a mother?"

"Yes; she thought him lost to her. Conceive her joy when he shall be restored to her, absolved from the unworthy accusation which has been brought against him. Was I not right in saying that his worst days were past? Do not speak to him of his mother. I confide this secret to you, because you interest yourself so generously for Germain, and your devotion to him merits that you should be relieved from all anxiety as to his future fate."

"I thank you, M. Rodolph; you need not fear my discretion. I will keep your secret."

And Rigolette continued reading Germain's letter: "If you will have the goodness, mademoiselle, to cast your eye over these notes, you will see that my whole life has been very unhappy, except during the time I passed in the house with you. You will find written out at length, in a sort of memorandum, entitled '*My Only Days of Happiness,*' that which I should never have had the courage to tell you in words. Almost every evening when I left your society, I thus gave vent to the feelings of consolation which your affection gave to me, and which alone alleviated the bitterness of my life. That feeling which in you was merely friendship, was love to me. I have ever concealed my love from you, until the present moment, when I can be no more to you than a subject of regret. My destiny has been so unhappy, that I should never even, had it not been for this, have spoken to you of this feeling. Although sincere and deeply-seated, it might have brought misfortune upon you. I have yet one more wish to point out to you, and I hope that you will carry it out. I have observed with what admirable courage you labour, and how much prudence and management you require, in order to live upon the humble means which you procure with so much toil. Often, without telling you of it, I have trembled at the idea that some illness, brought on, perchance, by the excess of labour, might at some time reduce you to a situation, of which I could not even think without shuddering. It has been a sweet thought to me, that I could in a great measure rescue you from those torments, and perhaps from other miseries also, of which your careless youth has as yet, happily for you, taken no note."

"What does he mean, M. Rodolph?" cried Rigolette, astonished.

"Proceed, and we shall see."

Rigolette then resumed her reading: "I well know on how small means you live, and of what vast aid to you the smallest sum would be in times of difficulty. I am myself very poor; but by dint of economy I have laid by fifteen hundred francs, which are lodged in the hands of a banker. These are all my possessions. By my will, which you will find enclosed, permit me to leave them to you. Accept them as a legacy from a friend, from a dear brother, who is now no more."

"Ah! M. Rodolph," said Rigolette, bursting into tears, and giving the letter to the prince, "this pains me too deeply. This excellent Germain, to occupy himself thus with my prospects. Ah! what a heart he has! Heavens! what a feeling heart!"

"Noble and brave young man!" cried Rodolph, with emotion; "but calm yourself, my child. God be praised, Germain is not dead; this will in anticipation, will have answered the purpose of showing us how much he has loved you—how much he loves you still."

"And then to think, M. Rodolph, that I should never even have suspected," replied Rigolette, wiping away her tears. "From the beginning of our being neighbours, M. Giraudeau and M. Cabrion were always talking to me about their burning passion, as they called it; but seeing that that led to nothing, they got out of the habit of talking about such things to me. M. Germain, on the contrary, never once spoke of love. When I proposed to him that we should be good friends, he accepted my offer frankly; and, since then, we have lived as true comrades. And yet, and yet—certainly I may confess to you—I was not exactly vexed that M. Germain had never told me that he was in love with me."

"And yet you were a little—surprised, shall I say?"

"Well, yes, M. Rodolph; I thought it was his melancholy which caused him to act thus."

"And in fact you wished that he had had a little less of this—melancholy?"

"It was his only fault," answered the grisette, with infinite simplicity; "but now I excuse it. I am very angry with myself for having reproached him with it in my own mind."

"In the first place, because you know that, unfortunately, he had much cause to be melancholy," replied Rodolph, with a smile; "and in the second, because you have now proof positive that, in spite of this melancholy, he was in love with you."

"It is true—to be loved by so fine a young man—that is most flattering to the heart; is it not, M. Rodolph?"

"And, perhaps, you will one day share his affection?"

"Gracious! M. Rodolph, it is very tempting. Thus poor Germain is very much to be pitied. I put myself in his place: if, at the moment when I supposed myself abandoned and despised by all the world, one person, a true friend, approached me more kindly, more tenderly than I fancied was possible, I should be very happy." After a moment's silence, Rigolette continued with a smile: "On the other hand, we are so poor, both of us, that this would be hardly reasonable. Hold, M. Rodolph, I will not think of this. Perhaps I am mistaken: one thing is certain, however, that I will do all I can for Germain, while he remains in prison. Once at liberty, it will be time enough to consider whether, if it should be love, what would you have, my neighbour? It will be love. Up to that point it will trouble me to know where to find myself. But it is growing late, M. Rodolph; will you get these papers together, while I go and make up a parcel of linen? Ah! I was forgetting the scent-bag that contains the orange-coloured handkerchief I gave him. Doubtless it is in this drawer. Ah! here it is. Oh! see how pretty it is, this little perfumed bag! and all embroidered, too! Poor Germain! he has kept it like a relic, this little handkerchief. I recollect well the last time when I put it on, and when I gave it to him. He was glad—so glad!"

At this moment some one knocked at the door of the room.

"Who is there?" said Rodolph.

"Some one who wishes to speak with Madame Mathieu," answered a thin, hoarse voice, with the accent peculiar to the lowest order of the people. Madame Mathieu was the brokeress in diamonds, of whom we have spoken.

This voice, accentuated singularly, excited some vague recollections in the mind of Rodolph. Wishing to relieve them, he took the light, and went himself to open the door.

He found himself face to face with one of the regular customers of the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, whom he recognised on the spot, so clearly was the fatal stamp of vice imprinted on that juvenile and beardless countenance. It was Barbillon. Barbillon, the disguised driver of the hackney-coach, who had taken the Schoolmaster and the Chouette to the hollow road, near Bouqueval; the assassin of the husband of the miserable milk-woman, who had instigated the farm-labourers of Arnouville against Goualeuse.

Whether the wretch had forgotten the features of Rodolph, which he had seen but once at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, or whether the alteration of the costume prevented him from recognizing *the conqueror of Chourineur*, he manifested no astonishment at his appearance.

"What do you wish?" said Rodolph.

"It is a letter for Madame Mathieu: can I deliver it to her in person?" answered Barbillon.

"She does not live here," replied Rodolph. "Inquire at the opposite door."

"I thank you, sir; they told me the door on the left, but I made a mistake."

Rodolph did not remember the name of the brokeress in diamonds, which Morel, the lapidary, had only mentioned to him two or three times. He had thus no particular reason to feel any interest in the woman to whom Barbillon had come with this message. Nevertheless, although he was ignorant of the crimes of this bandit, his face bore the impress of so much villainy, that he waited for a moment on the threshold of the door, to see the person to whom Barbillon had brought this letter.

Scarcely had Barbillon knocked at the door, which faced that of Germain, when it was opened, and the diamond brokeress, a stout woman of about fifty years, appeared at it, holding a candle in her hand.

"Madame Mathieu?" said Barbillon.

"'Tis I, my boy."

"Here is a letter: I am to wait an answer."

And Barbillon moved forward a step, to enter her apartment, but she made him a sign to stay where he was, unsealed the letter, holding it to the light of the flambeau, read it, and answered him with a well-pleased expression: "You will

what is required. I will go at the same hour as the last time. Many thanks," said the old woman.

"Yes, my good woman. Don't forget the messenger."

"Go and ask those who sent you. They are richer than I." And with these words the brokeress shut the door.

Rodolph entered the room of Germain, seeing Barbillon going rapidly down the staircase.

The brigand met, on the boulevard, a man of low and savage aspect, who was waiting for him before a shop.

Although several persons might have heard him—without understanding him, it is true—Barbillon appeared so much delighted, that he could not refrain from saying to his companion: "Come," said he, speaking in the slang of bandits, "come and drink some brandy, Nicholas. The old woman has fallen into the trap with a vengeance! She will come to the house of Chouette. Mother Martial will help us to take the jewels from her by force, and afterwards we will carry off the *stiff 'un* in your boat."

"Let us make haste, then; I must be at Asnières in good time. I am afraid that my brother Martial suspects something."

And the two bandits, after having held this conversation—utterly unintelligible to any who might have overheard them—took their way towards the Rue Saint-Denis.

Some moments afterwards, Rigolette and Rodolph left Germain's apartment, entered a hackney-coach, and arrived at the Rue du Temple.

The hackney-coach stopped.

At the moment when the door was opened, Rodolph recognized, by the light of Rigolette's lamp, his faithful Murphy, who was waiting for him at the entrance of the alley.

"What is the matter?" Rodolph asked him hastily, while Rigolette was removing several parcels from the carriage.

"A great misfortune has happened, my lord."

"Speak! in the name of Heaven!"

"The Marquis d'Harville ——"

"You terrify me! ——"

"He was giving, this morning, a great breakfast to several of his friends—everything had passed off admirably—he, in particular, had never been so lively—when a fatal imprudence ——"

"Go on! go on! I beg of you!"

"Playing with a pistol, which he did not know to be loaded ——"

"He wounded himself dreadfully?"

"My lord! ——"

"What more?"

"Something more dreadful yet! ——"

"What do you say?"

"He is dead!"

"D'Harville! Ah! this is frightful," exclaimed Rodolph, with an accent so piercing, that Rigolette, who was just stepping out of the hackney-coach with her parcels, said: "Heavens! what is the matter with you, M. Rodolph?"

"Some dreadful news that I have this moment announced to my friend, mademoiselle," replied Murphy; for the prince was so completely overcome, that he was unable to make any answer.

"Is it a great misfortune?" asked Rigolette, trembling as she spoke.

"A very great misfortune," replied the squire.

"Ah! this is too dreadful," said Rodolph, after a silence of some minutes; and then, remembering the presence of Rigolette, he said: "Pardon me, my good child, that I do not accompany you. I will send you my direction, and an order which will admit you to the prison of Germain."

"Ah! M. Rodolph, I assure you, that I participate deeply in the sorrow which has fallen on you. I thank you for having accompanied me—I shall see you again very soon, shall I not?"

"Yes, my good child, very soon."

"Good night, M. Rodolph," said Rigolette, very sadly, vanishing with the words into the alley, with the different articles which she was bringing away from Germain's apartment.

The prince and Murphy entered the hackney-coach, which carried them to the Rue Plumet.

Rodolph immediately wrote the following note to Clémence:—

"Madame, I have this moment learned the unexpected blow which has befallen you, and robbed me of one of my best friends—I leave it to you to imagine my astonishment, my horror. It is, however, necessary, that I now trouble you with matters foreign to this cruel event. I have just learned that your stepmother, who has certainly been in Paris for some days, departs to-night for Normandy, taking along with her Polidori.

"My motive is to inform you of the danger to which your father is undoubtedly subjected. Permit me to give you some advice, which I believe to be salutary. After the frightful calamity of this morning, your leaving Paris for a little while, will but be too natural. Therefore, take my advice: set out, set out at once for Aubiers, in order to arrive there as soon as possible after your stepmother; at all events, at the same time with her. Be not alarmed: afar off, as close at hand, I ever watch over you—the abominable projects of your stepmother shall be unmasked and frustrated.

"Adieu, madame; I write these words to you in haste. My spirit is broken when I think of last evening, when I left *him*, more tranquil and more happy than I have seen him for many a day.

"Trust, madame, my deep and sincere devotion.

"RODOLPH."

Pursuing the advice of the prince, Madame d'Harville, three hours after having received this letter, was on her way for Normandy, to visit her father.

A post-chaise, starting from the hotel of Rodolph, followed on the the same route.

Unhappily, in the troubles produced by this complication of events, and by the hurry of her departure, Clémence forgot to inform the prince, that she had met Fleur-de-Marie at Saint-Lazare.

It may perhaps be remembered, that on the previous evening, Chouette had threatened Madame Seraphin to reveal the existence of Goualeuse, affirming that she knew—as she indeed really did—where that girl was to be found.

It may also be remembered, that after this interview, the notary, Jacques Ferrand, fearing the disclosure of his criminal proceedings, considered that he had a strong inducement to cause the disappearance of Goualeuse, whose existence, once recognised, might have compromised his safety.

He had written therefore to Bradamanti, one of his accomplices, to come and see him, in order to devise a new plot, of which Fleur-de-Marie should be the victim.

Bradamanti, engaged with interests so pressing as were those of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, who had sinister reasons for carrying the charlatan with her to the house of Count d'Orbigny—Bradamanti, we say, unquestionably thinking that it would be more to his interest to serve his old friend, took no notice of the invitation of the notary, and set out for Normandy, without seeing Madame Seraphin.

The storm was on the point of bursting over the head of Jacques Ferrand. In the course of the same day, Chouette came to reiterate her threats; and in order to prove that they were not vain, declared to the notary that the little girl formerly abandoned by Madame Seraphin, was at this moment a prisoner at Saint-Lazare, under the name of Goualeuse; and, that if he did not give her ten thousand francs within three days, that young girl should receive papers, which would inform her that she had been intrusted in her childhood to the care of Jacques Ferrand.

According to his custom, he denied everything audaciously, and drove away Chouette from his door, as a lying impostor, although he was not only convinced of the truth of what she told him, but alarmed by the drift of her menaces. Thanks to his numerous associations, the notary was enabled the very same day, during the interview of Fleur-de-Marie with Madame d'Harville, to learn that Goualeuse was, in truth, a prisoner at Saint-Lazare, and that her conduct having been singularly excellent, she was expected to receive her discharge at a moment's notice.

Strengthened with this information, having matured one of his diabolical plans, Jacques Ferrand perceived that the aid of Bradamanti was becoming more and more necessary to him for the execution of it, and thence the vain efforts of Madame Seraphin to obtain an interview with the charlatan.

Having learned that same evening of the departure of the latter, the notary, compelled to act hastily, by the imminence of his fears and dangers, bethought himself of the Martials, that family of fresh-water pirates, dwelling near the bridge of Asnières, to whom Bradamanti had proposed to send Louise Morel, in order to get rid of her with impunity.

Being absolutely compelled to employ an accomplice in his atrocious design against Fleur-de-Marie, the notary took the most shrewd precautions to avoid being himself compromised, in case a new crime should be committed; and the day following the departure of Bradamanti for Normandy, Madame Seraphin set out in haste for the house of Martial.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ISLE OF RAVAGEURS.

THE following scenes are to be understood as occurring on the evening of the day whereon, by the orders of Jacques Ferrand, Madame Seraphin visited the Martials, those fresh-water pirates, dwelling on the point of a little island near the bridge of Asnières.

Martial, the father of the family, perishing, as *his* father had before him, on the scaffold, had left a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned for life to the galleys. Of all this numerous family, there now remained at the Isle of the *Ravageur*—a name which all the country gave to this haunt, we shall presently show why—the widow Martial, with three sons, and two daughters. Of the sons, the eldest—the lover of Louve—was five-and-twenty years of age; the second twenty, and the youngest twelve. The two daughters were, one of eighteen, the other nine years of age. Instances of families like this, in which the awful inheritance of crime appears to be perpetual, are but too common.

This *must* be so! Let us repeat this fact for ever: society thinks only of *punishing*, never of *preventing* guilt. One criminal shall be sent to the galleys for life, another shall be decapitated. These convicts naturally leave young children. Will society take any heed of the condition of these orphans?—of these orphans, *whom it has made orphans*, by cutting off their father by a civil death, if not by actual decapitation? Will it substitute a salutary conservatory tutelage, in the default of his guardianship, whom the law has pronounced infamous, incapable—in default of his guardianship whom the law has slain? No! *When the reptile is destroyed, its poison dies with it:* so says society. It is mistaken: the poison of corruption is so subtle, so corrosive, so contagious, that it becomes almost always hereditary; but if resisted in due season, it never will become incurable. Is this a fantastic contradiction? Does not ocular demonstration prove that a man has died of a transmissible disease? By means of careful preventives, his posterity shall be preserved from the affection to which he fell a victim. Surely the same means will produce the same effects in moral as in physical science.

Suppose it to be demonstrated that a malefactor almost always bequeaths to his son the germ of precocious crime, will society do that for the preservation of this young soul, which the physician does for the body, when he combats hereditary disease? No, it will not. Instead of curing that unhappy wretch, it will suffer him to putrify—to perish.

And then, as the people suppose that the son of the executioner must, of consequence, be an executioner, so will they suppose that the son of a felon must, of consequence, be a felon. In the next degree, we will consider a corruption caused by the selfishness of society, as the proof of a hereditary taint. So that, if, despite his fatal teaching, the orphan—whom the law has made an orphan—by chance, remains industrious and honest, a barbarous prejudice of mankind will cause the paternal blight to rest upon him. To complete his unmerited condemnation, he will scarce find work if he seek it. And instead of coming to his assistance, of saving him from discouragement, from despair, and, above all, from the dangerous indignation against injustice, which sometimes drives the noblest spirits to rebellion and to guilt, society will say: "If he turn out a rascal, we will take care of him. Have we not our jailors, our turnkeys, our executioners?"

Thus, for him who preserves his purity—an accident as rare as it is glorious—in spite of the teachings of detestable example, there is no support, no encouragement. Thus, for him who, plunged from his very birth into a hotbed of domestic depravity, is vitiated in his very youth, there is no hope of cure!

"Yes, yes! I will cure the orphan, whom I

have made an orphan," says society; "but at my own time, in my own place—by my own method—sometime hereafter.

"To extirpate a cancer, to excise an imposthume, action must be had on the instant. A criminal calls for attention.

"The prisons and the galleys, these are my hospitals; in cases quite incurable, there is the guillotine. As for the preservation of my orphan, I will think about it by and by. But, patience! I tell you, patience! Let the germ of hereditary corruption, which is now hatching in him, ripen—let it grow strong—let it extend its ravages deeply. Patience! then patience be it! When our man shall be rotten to the heart's core; when he shall sweat out crime through every pore; when a desperate theft or a brutal murder have cast him on the bench of infamy, where his father sat before him—oh! then we will cure the inheritor of crime, as we cured the legator. At the galleys, or on the scaffold, the son will find the father's place still warm for him."

Yes! in such circumstances, so reasons society. And then it is astonished, it is indignant; it is tempted to see transmissions of hereditary theft and murder handed down, generation after generation.

The object of the gloomy picture which comes next, *the fresh-water pirates*, is to show that there may be in a family hereditary successions of guilt, when society will not step in, either by legal or by voluntary aid, to shield *the wretched orphans by the law*, from the dread consequences of the doom thundered against their father.

The reader must pardon us for prefacing this new episode by an introduction. Here is the reason why we do so: In proportion as we advance with this publication, so furiously is its moral end attacked, and, as we think, so unjustly, that we must be permitted to insist upon the serious and upright intention which has sustained and guided us thus far. Many grave, delicate, and exalted minds, have thought good to encourage our attempts, and to send us the flattering proofs of their advocacy of our views. We owe it, therefore, perhaps, to these friends—both known and unknown—to answer, once for all, these blind and obstinate criminations of our purpose, which have resounded even, we are told, in the chambers of the legislative assembly.

To proclaim THE ODIOUS IMMORALITY of our work is, as it seems to us, to proclaim implicitly the odiously immoral tendencies of those persons who honour us with their lively sympathies.

It is in the name, then, of those sympathies, as much as it is of our own, that we shall endeavour to prove by one example, chosen from among many, that this work is not entirely devoid of generous and practical ideas. In one of the earlier portions of the book, we gave a scheme of a *model farm*, founded by Rodolph, *for the encouragement, instruction, and reward of poor and industrious cultivators*. To this proposition we added the words: "The industrious, but unfortunate poor, deserve at least as much attention as the criminal. Nevertheless, there are numerous societies for the patronage of young imprisoned or liberated convicts; while no society has yet been founded for the encouragement of the youthful poor, whose conduct has been exemplary. So that it is actually necessary to have committed an offence, in order to gain admission to those institutions, otherwise so salutary nd b eneficial."

And we made a labourer at the farm of Bouqueval, speak thus: "It is humane and charitable, never to despair of reforming the wicked, but the good also must be encouraged to hope. If an honest young man, healthy and laborious, having a disposition to learn, should present himself to that farm for reformed thieves, they would ask him: 'Have you ever stolen anything, and been a little of a vagabond?' 'No.' 'Well then, there is no place for you here.'"

This discrepancy has also struck the minds of greater men than we—thanks to them for all of our Utopia which has been made real.

Under the patronage of one of the most eminent and honourable men of our times—the Count Portalis—and under the intelligent direction of a true philanthropist, with a generous heart united to an enlightened and practical mind—M. Allier—a society has been formed recently, for the purpose *of giving aid to poor and upright young persons of the department du Seine, and of employing them in agricultural colonies*. This single and simple approach to the realisation of our views, is enough to prove the moral tenor of our work.

We are very proud, very happy, to have met the founders of this new work of philanthropy on a common basis of ideas, hopes, and aspirations; for we are one of the humblest, but of the most deeply-convinced missionaries, bent upon promulgating these two grand truths—that it is the duty of society to PREVENT CRIME, and to *encourage* and RECOMPENSE VIRTUE, as far as it is possible to do so.

Since we have spoken of this new work of charity, of which the just and moral intention must have a fruitful and salutary action, let us hope that its founders will think of filling up another gap, by extending hereafter their tutelary patronage, or at least their anxious attention, *to young children whose fathers shall have been put to death, or condemned to an infamous penalty amounting to civil death*, and who, we repeat it, ARE RENDERED ORPHANS BY THE VERY APPLICATION OF THE LAW. Such of those wretched children as shall be worthy of attention by their sound tendencies, and by their misery, will deserve yet a more particular attention, owing to the fact that they are *exceptions*, under circumstances singularly painful, difficult, and dangerous. Yes! painful, difficult, and dangerous!

Let us go over it again. The family of a condemned criminal, almost always the victims of cruel prejudices, after seeking for work in vain, finds itself compelled, in order to escape general reprobation, to retire from places where it was wont to find the means of existence. Then, irritated and embittered by injustice, already reduced to the level of criminals, by the consequence of deeds of which they are innocent, sometimes having got through all honourable resources, these miserable wretches will be driven even to the brink of falling, although they may yet remain upright. Supposing, on the other hand, they have already been subjected to influences almost invariably corrupting, should we not try to save them, while there is yet time?

Moreover, the presence of these *orphans of the law*, in the midst of those other children, chosen by the society of which we speak, would be for them, too, a useful teaching. It would show that although the guilty one is inexorably dealt with, his kindred lose nothing, but gain rather, in the world's esteem, if, by dint of exertion, courage, and virtue, they succeed in raising up again to light, a dishonoured name.

[The Rendezvous for Ravageurs.]

Shall we say that the legislature intended to render punishment more terrible, by virtually striking at the guilty father through the prospective doom of his innocent progeny?

That would be barbarous, immoral, senseless. Is it not, on the contrary, a noble truth to teach a people, that there is no necessity inherent in crime, of its hereditary perpetuation—that the original stain is not indelible?

May we dare to hope that these reflections may be deemed worthy of some consideration by the new society of patronage?

Without doubt, it is lamentable to think that the State never takes the lead in these vital questions, which touch the very quick of social organization. And yet can it be otherwise?

In one of the latter legislative sessions, a petitioner, struck, as he said, by the misery and sufferings of the lower classes, proposed, among other means of remedying them, *the foundation of maisons d'invalides, destined for the reception of workers.* This project, unquestionably defective in form, but nevertheless embodying a high philanthropical idea, worthy of the most serious examination, inasmuch as it is connected with the vast question of organisation of industry, *was received with prolonged and general shouts of laughter.*

So much premised, let us pass onwards. Let us return to the fresh-water pirates, and think of the *ravageur.*

The *ravageurs,* as well as the *debarcleurs* and *dechireurs* of boats, pass the day up to their waist in water, in the exercise of their trade.

The *debarcleurs* drag ashore drift timber.

The *dechireurs* demolish the rafts which bring down the timber—quite as aquatic in their mode of labouring.

The *ravageurs* have yet a different object in their labour. Wading into the river, as far as he can go,

the *ravageur* draws up the sand of the river into a vessel by means of a long rake; then gathering it into great wooden troughs, he washes it as a miner does his ore, or a gold-washer his precious sand, and thus collects from it great quantities of metallic fragments of all kinds—iron, copper, lead, and tin, produced from the great variety of utensils lost in the stream.

Oftentimes, also, the *ravageurs* find in the sand fragments of gold or silver trinkets, either from the sewers through which the streams disgorge themselves, or from the masses of ice and snow, collected in the streets and cast into the river, in winter time.

Now the reader is aware in consequence of what character and employment these labourers—who are for the most part, honest, industrious, and inoffensive—have gained an appellation so terrific.

The elder Martial, who was the first inhabitant of the isle, having been a *ravageur*—wretched employment!—the dwellers on the river bank christened it the *Isle of the Ravageur*.

The habitation of the fresh-water pirates is situated at the southern end of this domain.

During the day passengers can read on a sign-board, swinging above the door:—

THE RENDEZVOUS FOR RAVAGEURS.
Good wine, good fish stewed and fried.
Boats let out here for excursions.

It will be perceived, then, that to his other trades, whether open or concealed, the head of this accursed family added the occupations of tavern-keeper, fisherman, and lender of boats.

The widow of the executed man still kept the house, and thither resorted all sorts of people without occupation, vagabonds, exhibitors of wild beasts, travelling mountebanks, and the like, to hold their parties of pleasure on Sundays, and at other times, not holidays.

Martial, the lover of Louve, the eldest son of the family, and the least guilty of them all, was a poaching fisherman; and, when hard pushed, played the part of a real brave, and, for a certain remuneration, he took the part of the weak against the strong.

Another of the brothers, Nicholas, the destined accomplice of Barbillon in the murder of the diamond-broker, was outwardly a *ravageur*, but in reality a pirate on the waters of the Seine, and along the shores.

And to conclude, François, the youngest son of the convict, rowed the guests to and fro who wished to make excursions on the water; while, as a memorandum, we will just mention Ambrose Martial, who had been condemned to the galleys for burglary and intent to murder.

The eldest daughter, nicknamed *Calebasse*, assisted her mother in the kitchen, and waited on the guests, her sister Amandine aiding in like manner as far as she was able.

On this evening, the night was dark without; heavy, opaque, grey clouds, driving before the wind, now hid, now suffered to be seen athwart their fantastic rents, glimpses far, far beyond, of pure, dark azure, studded with glittering stars.

The outline of the island, edged with tall, leafless poplars, was painted strongly in relief against the darkly luminous background of the nocturnal sky, and the gleamy transparence of the shaded river.

The house, built with irregular gables, was buried in complete obscurity; two windows only on the ground-floor were lighted, and of these, the lattices blazed brightly, throwing long lines of ruddy lustre over the little wavelets which washed against the dock close to the house. The chains of the boats moored there gave out, at times, an ominous clank, which mingled mournfully with the wailing of the breeze in the poplars, and the dull rushing of the river.

A portion of the family were assembled in the kitchen, a large, low room, with two windows facing the door, and a long dresser beneath them; on the left, a tall chimney-piece; on the right, a staircase leading to the upper stories; beside the staircase a doorway led into a large dining-room, with many tables for the frequenters of the tavern. The light of a lamp, mingled with that of the fire upon the hearth, flamed upon many saucepans, and other utensils of copper, hanging in rows upon the walls, or arranged on shelves with different kinds of earthenware. A large table occupied the middle of this kitchen. The widow of the executed felon, surrounded by three of her children, was seated in the chimney-corner.

This woman, very tall and bony, appeared to be about forty-five years old. She was dressed all in black. A mourning handkerchief, knotted *en marmotte*, concealing all her hair, surrounded her flat and wrinkled forehead. Her nose was long, straight, and sharply pointed; her chin prominent; her cheeks hollow; her skin tawney, with its whole surface deeply pitted with the small-pox; the corners of her mouth always drawn down, rendered yet harder the expression of a face, cold, sinister, and impassible as a mask of marble; and, to complete the picture, heavy grey eyebrows overshadowed eyes of a dim, rayless blue.

The widow of the felon was employed, like her daughters, in sewing. The eldest, tall and thin, was extremely like her mother. There was the same calm, hard, vicious face—the same thin nose—the same dry mouth—the same pallid glare of the blue eye—only her complexion, which was clayey and yellow as an orange, had gained her the nickname of *Calebasse*. She did not wear mourning; her gown was brownish; her cap of black net showed two bands of hair, of a pale, lustreless brown.

François, the youngest of the sons of Martial, squatted on a low stool, was taking up the broken meshes of an *aldret*, a very destructive kind of net, prohibited on the Seine under the heaviest penalties. Notwithstanding the sun-burnt tint which embrowned it, the complexion of this child was florid; a forest of red hair covered his head, his forehead was prominent, his eyes quick and piercing; he bore no resemblance to his mother, or to his eldest sister; he had a dogged, yet timid air, and, from time to time, cast through the sort of shaggy mane which fell over his face, an oblique glance of defiance at his mother, or exchanged with his little sister a look full of affection and intelligence. She, seated by the side of her brother, was employed, not in marking, but in erasing the marks from some linen stolen the previous night. She was nine years old, and resembled her brother no less than her elder sister did her mother. Her features, without being regular, were less coarse than those of François; although full of freckles, her complexion was dazzling bright, her lips full and lustrous, her hair red, but fine, silky, and brilliant; her eyes small, but pure and soft.

When the eyes of Amandine met those of Françoise, she pointed to the door; at this sign

François answered by a sigh, then calling the attention of his sister by a rapid movement, he counted distinctly ten meshes with the point of his netting needle.

That sign was intended to convey to her, in the symbolic language of the children, that their brother Martial would not return until ten o'clock.

To look at the two women, with their silent manner and vicious looks, and the two poor children, uneasy, taciturn, and timid, they would have been taken for two executioners and their victims. Calebasse, perceiving that Amandine had ceased working for a moment, said to her, harshly: "Shall you have soon finished unmarking that chemise?"

The child dropped her head without answering, and, with her fingers and her scissors, hastily finished ripping out the threads which marked some letters on the linen.

In a few minutes Amandine timidly handed her work to the widow, saying: "Mother, I have finished it."

Without a word, the widow cast her another piece of linen. The child could not catch it in time, and it fell to the ground, when the elder sister struck her a smart blow on the arm with her heavy hand, crying out: "Little fool!"

Amandine returned to her seat and went actively to work, having exchanged with her brother a glance, her eyes yet full of tears. The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen.

Without, the wind whistled and shook the tavern sign. That mournful grinding, and the dull hissing of the pot that simmered on the fire, were the only sounds that were audible.

The two children watched with secret terror the silence of their mother. For, though she was habitually no talker, this absolute taciturnity, with a certain compression of her lips, showed them that the widow was in what they called one of her *white rages*—that is to say, a prey to a fierce and concentrated irritation.

The fire seemed about to go out for want of wood.

"François, a billet!" exclaimed Calebasse.

The young net-mender looked behind the corner of the chimney-piece, and answered: "There are no more!"

"Go to the wood-pile!" answered Calebasse.

François muttered a few unintelligible words, and did not stir.

"Now—now, do you understand me, François?" said Calebasse, sharply.

The widow of the executed man laid down upon her knees a napkin which she, too, was unmarking, and glared on her son.

His head was cast down, but he seemed to *feel* the terrible gaze that was fixed upon him. Fearing to meet that hideous face, the child remained motionless.

"Well, are you deaf, François?" said Calebasse, angrily. "You see, mother!"

The elder sister appeared to consider it her function to accuse the two children, and to call for the punishment which her mother so pitilessly inflicted.

Amandine, seeing the movement, jogged her brother's elbow gently, to induce him, without speaking, to obey Calebasse.

François stirred not. His elder sister looked at her mother, to demand his punishment. The widow understood her, and pointed with her fleshless fingers to a stout, pliant willow rod, which stood in the chimney-corner. Calebasse leaned back, and, reaching the instrument of punishment, placed it in the hands of her mother. François, who had observed every motion of his mother, leaped up suddenly, and got out of reach of the threatening wand.

"Do you wish my mother to beat you to death?" cried Calebasse.

The widow, grasping the heavy stick, and contracting yet more her pale, thin lips, glared fixedly on François, without uttering a word; but by the slight trembling of the hands of Amandine, and the sudden redness which suffused the back of her neck as she stooped down her head, it was easy to perceive that the child, used to similar scenes, was terrified at the punishment which awaited her brother. He had taken refuge in the corner of the kitchen, and seemed at the same time terrified and angry.

"Beware!—my mother is about to rise: you have no time to lose," said the eldest sister.

"It is all one to me," said François, growing pale: "I had rather be beaten, even as I was the night before last, than go to the wood-pile—and at night, too!"

"And why so?" asked Calebasse, impatiently.

"I am afraid at the wood-pile—I am!" replied the boy, shuddering in spite of himself.

"You are afraid, little fool! and of what?"

François shook his head sulkily, without answering.

"Will you speak? what are you afraid of?"

"I don't know; but I *am* afraid."

"You have been thither a hundred times—last night even!"

"All's one: I will go no more."

"My mother is rising!"

"So much the worse for me," screamed the child; "but she may beat me—she may *kill* me—but she cannot make me go to the wood-pile; and above all, at night!"

"But once more—why?" said Calebasse.

"Well, then, because ——"

"Because what?"

"Because there is some one ——"

"There is some one—well?"

"Buried there!" muttered François, shuddering.

Even the widow of the felon, despite her impassibility, could not command a quick, sharp shiver, which ran through her. It seemed as if the two women had been shaken by the same electric shock.

"There is some one buried in the wood-pile?" asked Calebasse, shrugging up her shoulders.

"Yes," said François, in a voice so low that he could scarcely be heard.

"Liar!" cried Calebasse.

"I tell you, that just now, when I was moving the wood in the dark corner of the wood-house, I saw the bone of a dead man sticking out of the ground, which was damp all around it," replied François.

"Do you understand, mother?—is he not a fool?" said Calebasse, making a sign of mutual intelligence to the widow. "They are the mutton bones which I put there for the lye."

"It was no mutton-bone!" said the child, terrified; "they were bones buried there—bones of a dead man—a foot sticking out of the ground: I saw it very well."

"And I suppose you told this fine discovery to your brother—to your good friend Martial, did you not?" asked Calebasse, with savage irony.

François replied nothing.

"Accursed little spy!" shrieked Calebasse, furiously. "Because he is as cowardly as a cow, he is quite capable of getting us all guillotined—as they guillotined my father!"—using the slang phrase.

"Since you call me a spy," said Frangois, exasperated, "I will tell it all to my brother Martial. I had not told him, for I had not seen him since; but when he comes back this evening, I ——"

The child dared not complete the sentence; for his mother rose and came towards him, calm, but inexorable. Although she had an habitual stoop, she was very tall for a woman. Holding the stick in one hand, the widow seized her son by the other, and, despite his terror, his resistance, his tears, and his entreaties, dragging him after her, she forced him up the staircase at the end of the kitchen.

A moment afterwards, on the floor above, the sound of cruel blows, mixed with loud screams and sobs, was heard distinctly. A few minutes afterwards, the sound ceased.

A door was shut violently, and the widow of the felon came down the stairs again, calm and impassible as she went up; and, placing the rod in the proper position, seated herself again beside the hearth, and went on with her sewing, not having uttered any word or sound whatever.

CHAPTER V.

THE FRESH-WATER PIRATES.

After a pause of a few moments, the widow of the executed man said to her daughter: "Go after some wood; we will arrange the wood-pile this evening, after the return of Nicholas and Martial."

"Martial! do you wish to tell him that ——"

"Bring some wood," said the widow, sharply, interrupting her daughter.

The girl, accustomed to bend before that iron will, lighted her lantern and went out.

The opening of the door revealed the darkness of the night; the tall poplars cracked in the wind; the chains attached to the boats clanked; the wind whistled, and a sort of moan came up from the waves of the river—sounds that were peculiarly sad and gloomy.

During the scene which we have described, Amandine, touched deeply by the fate of Frangois, whom she had loved so affectionately, had neither dared to raise her eyes, nor wipe away the tears which dropped one by one upon her lap. She smothered her sobs, and tried even to restrain the palpitation of her heart. Tears obscured her vision. While she had hastened to pick the mark from the linen which had been given her, she had wounded her fingers with her scissors: the cut bled, but the poor child thought less of the pain which she suffered, than of the punishment which would be inflicted upon her for soiling the linen committed to her charge. Fortunately, the widow, absorbed in her own reflections, did not perceive it.

Calebasse came in, bringing a basket full of wood, and replied to a glance of her mother by a nod of affirmation, intending to convey by it, that the foot of the dead man was above the ground.

The woman bit her lips, and continued to work, but she moved the needle more rapidly. Calebasse replenished the fire, watched the boiling of the kettle, and resumed her seat by the side of her mother.

"Nicholas does not arrive," she said: "I hope that the old woman who came here this morning, and arranged an interview between him and Bradamanti, has not led him into any bad scrape. She looked very mysterious; she would neither tell her name, nor explain her business, nor tell where she came from." And the widow shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think that Nicholas is in any danger, mother?—Perhaps you are right. The old woman asked him to be, at seven o'clock this evening, on the quay Billy, opposite the landing, and wait there for a man who wished to see him, and who would give 'Bradamanti' as a password. There can be no danger in all this. If Nicholas is late, the reason is, that he has found something on the way, in the same manner that he did the night before last, when he *hooked* these clothes from the washing-boat." And she showed one of the pieces from which Amandine was removing the mark. She then addressed the child, and said: "What is meant by 'to hook?'"

"It means to take," said the child, without raising her eyes.

"It means to steal, little fool; do you hear?—to steal."

"Yes, sister."

"And when one understands how to hook skilfully, there is always something to be gained. The clothes which he stole yesterday will be very serviceable to us, and will only cost the trouble of removing the marks. Is it not so, mother?" said Calebasse, laughing, and displaying a set of irregular teeth, as yellow as her complexion.

The widow did not respond to the joke.

"Speaking of furnishing our house gratis, we can, perhaps, find access to another shop; you know that an old man has recently occupied the country-house of M. Griffon, the physician of the hospital of Paris, that stands alone, not a hundred paces from the river, opposite the plaster-kiln."

The widow cast down her head.

"Nicholas said, yesterday," continued Calebasse, "that perhaps there would be a good job in that house, and I found out this morning that there is some booty there. We must send Amandine to pry about the house; they will take no notice of her, she can pretend to be playing; she can examine everything thoroughly, and come and inform us what she has seen. Do you hear what I am saying?" added Calebasse, harshly, addressing Amandine.

"Yes, sister, I will go," replied the child, trembling.

"You will also say that you will do what is ordered, but, in fact, you do nothing, cunning one. The time when I told you to take one hundred sous from the drawer of the grocer at Asnières, while I kept him employed upon the other side of the shop, it was very easy to do; people don't suspect children: why didn't you do it?"

"My heart failed me, my sister; I did not dare to do it."

"The other day, you dared to steal a handkerchief from the bundle which the pedlar was selling in the tavern; did he find it out, you little fool?"

"You compelled me to do it, sister; the handkerchief was for you, and, besides, it was not money."

"What is the difference?"

"To take a handkerchief is not so bad as to take money."

"Upon your word of honour, it is Martial who teaches you these scruples, is it not?" said Calebasse, ironically. "You tell him everything, you little spy! Do you think we are afraid that your Martial will eat us up?" And then addressing her mother, she said: "I tell you, mother, that it will turn out bad for him; he wishes to command here. Nicholas and myself are both mad with him; he excites Amandine and François against us, and against you: it cannot last long."

"No," said the mother, in a short, sharp tone.

"Since Louve has been at Saint-Lazare, he has behaved like a madman towards everybody. Is it our fault that his mistress is in prison? When she gets out, let her come here; I will punish her faithfully. She won't be so savage hereafter."

The widow, after a moment's reflection, said to her daughter: "Do you think that something can be done with the old man that lives in the house of the physician?"

"Yes, mother."

"He looks like a beggar."

"For all that he is a nobleman."

"A noble?"

"Yes; does he not carry gold in his purse—although he goes on foot to Paris, and returns in the same manner, with his large cane as his only carriage?"

"How do you know that he has gold?"

"This afternoon I went to the post-office of Asnières, to see if there were no letters for us from Toulon."

At these words, which reminded the widow of the imprisonment of her son in the bagnio, she wrinkled her brows and subdued a sigh.

Calebasse continued: "I was waiting my turn, when the old man that lives in the physician's house entered. I knew him immediately by his beard, which is as white as his hair; by his sallow face, and his black eyebrows. He does not look very amiable, but, with all his age, seems to be a determined old fellow. He asked the woman who keeps the office, 'whether there were any letters for the Count de Saint-Remy, from Angers?' 'Yes,' she replied; 'there is one.' 'It is for me,' said he; 'here is my passport.' While the keeper of the office was examining it, the old man drew out a green silk purse to pay the postage. I saw through the meshes a heap of gold as big as an egg. There must have been at least forty or fifty louis," said Calebasse, whose eyes lighted with covetousness; "and yet he dresses like a beggar. I believe he is one of those old misers, who are fairly stuffed with gold. We know his name, and it will, perhaps, assist us in gaining an entrance, when Amandine has informed us whether there are any servants in the house."

A loud barking of dogs interrupted Calebasse.

"Ah! the dogs bark," she said; "they must hear the boat; it is either Martial or Nicholas."

At hearing the name of Martial, the features of Amandine were lightened up with an expression of restrained joy. After a few moments of expectation, during which the child kept her eyes fixed upon the door, Nicholas, the confederate of Barbillon, to her great disappointment, entered.

The countenance of Nicholas Martial was mean and ferocious. It was almost impossible to believe that he had sufficient courage to carry on his criminal and desperate schemes; but an unconquerable energy and determination supplied the place of the physical strength which he needed. Over his blue blouse, Nicholas wore a kind of great-coat without sleeves, made out of a goat-skin, on which the long brown hair was left. On entering the house, he threw upon the ground a pig of copper, which he seemed to have been carrying with great difficulty.

"Good night and good booty, mother!" he exclaimed, in a deep, gruff voice, after relieving himself from his burden; "there are still in my boat three more pigs like this, a bundle of clothes, and a box filled with I do not know what, for I have not amused myself with opening it; perhaps I am robbed myself, but we shall see."

"And what did the man of the quay Billy want?" asked Calebasse, while the widow looked at him in silence. For an answer, he placed his hand in the pocket of his pantaloons, and took therefrom many pieces of silver.

"Did you take all that from him?" asked Calebasse.

"No; he forked over this himself, and he will fork over eight hundred more after I have —— But enough at present; let us first unload my boat, and we can chat afterwards. Is Martial here?"

"No," said the sister.

"So much the better; we can dispose of the booty without his assistance. There is no need of his knowing anything about it."

"You are afraid of him, coward!" said Calebasse, sharply.

"Afraid of him! I?" and he shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid he will sell us: as for fear, this knife has too sharp a tongue."

"Oh, yes, you crow loud enough when he is not present, but when he is here, you shut up your bill."

Nicholas appeared indifferent to the reproach, and said: "Come, quick, quick to the boat: where is François, he might aid us?"

"Mother has flogged and shut him up-stairs; he will sleep without his supper."

"Good; but let him come for all that, and help unload the boat. With Calebasse, and him and myself, we can bring it all in one trip."

The widow raised her finger to the ceiling; Calebasse understood, and went after François. The gloomy face of the mother had lost a few of its wrinkles since the return of Nicholas; she loved him more than she did Calebasse, but less than the son who was imprisoned at Toulon; for the motherly affection of the ferocious creature seemed to increase in proportion to the turpitude of the family. This perverse partiality will explain the indifference of the widow, to her two youngest children, and her hatred of Martial, the eldest son, who, though leading far from an irreproachable life, might pass for an honest man, when compared with Nicholas, Calebasse, or the prisoner at Toulon.

"Where have you been wandering, to-night?" said the widow, to Nicholas.

"In coming from the quay Billy, where I had an appointment for this evening, I met with a long-boat near the bridge of the Invalides, fastened to the quay. It was quite dark, and as I saw no light in the cabin, I supposed the sailors where on shore. I went on board with the intention, if I met any person, to ask for a piece of rope to mend my oar. I entered the cabin, and found no one; I hooked whatever I could find—a bundle of clothes, a large box, and four pigs of copper, which I took from the deck, for I went twice. The long-boat was loaded with copper

and iron. But here comes François and Calebasse: come, quick to the boat, come, girl, and you, too, Amandine, you can bring the clothes. Before a dog learns how to hunt, he must learn how to carry."

When the widow was left alone, she employed herself with preparing the supper for the family; placed upon the table some glasses, bottles, china plates, silver spoons and forks. Before she had finished these arrangements, the children returned, heavily loaded.

The weight of the two pigs of copper which he carried on his shoulder, seemed to overpower little François, and Amandine was half concealed under a heap of stolen clothes which she carried on her head; while Nicholas, assisted by Calebasse, carried a box of white wood, on which was placed the fourth pig of copper.

"The box! the box! let us tear it open!" exclaimed Calebasse, with savage impatience. The pigs of copper were thrown upon the ground, while Nicholas took the hatchet which he carried in his belt, and forced it under the lid of the box, with the intention of prying it off. The red glare of the fire fell upon this scene of plunder, and the wind whistled without with redoubled violence. Nicholas, dressed in his goat-skin overcoat, was bending over the box, and giving utterance to oaths and blasphemous ejaculations, as the thick cover resisted his efforts. With eyes sparkling with cupidity, and cheeks flushed with the excitement of robbery, Calebasse pressed upon the box with her whole weight, in order to assist Nicholas.

The widow, separated from the group by the table, bent over it her tall form, and fixed upon the stolen box a fiery, feverish, and avaricious gaze; and finally, the two children, whose good instincts had so often triumphed over the cursed influence of this frightful domestic corruption, yielded to the attraction of a fatal curiosity.

Side by side, with sparkling eyes and oppressed breathing, François and Amandine were not the least eager to know the contents of the box, nor the least disappointed at the delay in the operations of Nicholas; finally, the lid broke into fragments. The family uttered a shout of joyful surprise, and all rushed with savage eagerness, upon the box, which probably had been consigned from Paris, to some dealer in dry goods on the river. It contained a large quantity of fabrics, designed for female apparel.

"Nicholas is not robbed," said Calebasse, unrolling a piece of *mousseline de laine*.

"No, indeed," added the brigand, displaying several yards of silk handkerchiefs. "I have made my expenses."

"Lenantine! that will sell like bread," said the widow, fumbling in the box.

"The receiver of Brss-Rouge, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy the cloth, and Father Micou, who lives in the quarter Saint-Honoré, will purchase the copper."

"Amandine," said François to his sister, "what a nice cravat one of those handkerchiefs would make, which Nicholas holds in his hand."

"It would also make a very handsome *marmotte*," responded the little girl with admiration.

"You have made a fine haul in boarding the long-boat, Nicholas," said Calebasse. "Look, here are some shawls; three of real raw silk, mother."

"Mother Burette will give at least five hundred francs for the assortment," said the widow, after an attentive examination.

"Then it must be worth, at least, fifteen hundred francs," said Nicholas. "It is well said that all receivers are thieves; but never mind, I am not very skilful at bartering; I shall be fool enough to do whatever Mother Burette says, and Father Micou also; but I do not care for him, he is a friend."

"After all, that seller of old iron is as thievish as the rest of the gang; but this rabble of receivers always abuse our necessities," said Calebasse, enveloping herself in a shawl.

"It's all told," said Nicholas, reaching the bottom of the box.

"We must now hide everything," said the widow.

"I will keep this shawl," said Calebasse.

"You keep it! You'll keep it if I give it to you, Madame Free-and-easy."

"You needn't make so much fuss about my taking it."

"Me! I thieve at the risk of my skin. You would have been *jugged* had I been caught in the long-boat."

"There's your shawl, I don't want it," said Calebasse, tartly, throwing it back into the box.

"I am not speaking about the shawl; I am not stingy enough for that; one more or one less will make no difference with Mother Burette, she buys by the lot," said Nicholas; "but, instead of saying you would keep the shawl, why didn't you ask me to give it to you? Keep it, or I will throw it into the fire to make the kettle boil."

These words seemed to calm the unpleasant feelings of Calebasse. She took the shawl without hesitation.

Nicholas seemed to be in a generous humour, for, tearing apart two handkerchiefs with his teeth, he threw one to both François and Amandine, who had not ceased contemplating the articles with envious eyes.

"Those are for you, urchins: the mouthful will give you a taste; appetite increases with eating. Now go to bed: I have something to say to mother, and your supper shall be sent upstairs."

The two children clapped their hands with joy, and shook in triumph the stolen handkerchiefs which had been given them.

"Now, little fools, will you listen to Martial again? Did he ever give you any handkerchiefs?"

François and Amandine interchanged glances, and cast down their eyes without reply.

"Speak!" said Calebasse, harshly; "did he ever give you any presents?"

"No, indeed, he never gave us any," said François, looking at his red handkerchief with delight.

"No, brother Martial does not give us presents," added Amandine, in a low voice, "because he can't."

"If he stole he could, couldn't he, François!" asked Nicholas, in a harsh voice.

"Yes, brother," said François, and then added: "What a beautiful handkerchief! what a fine cravat for Sundays!"

"What a splendid *marmotte* this will make," said Amandine.

"And the children of the man who keeps the plaster-kilns, will be filled with envy when they see you go by," said Calebasse; and she studied the faces of the children, to discern whether they understood the evil purport of these words. The abominable creature summoned vanity to aid in stifling the last virtuous impulse in their tender

bosoms. "The beggars! they will die with jealousy! With your red silk handkerchief, you will look like a princess."

"That is a fact," said François; "and I am much better pleased with my cravat, now that I know that the kiln-boys will be vexed because they hav'n't any. Don't you say so, Amandine?"

"I'm glad that I've got a fine *marmotte*, that's all."

"You never will be anything but a fool," said Calebasse, contemptuously; and then taking from the table a piece of bread and some cheese, she gave it to the children, and said to them: "Go to bed. Here is a lantern; take care you don't set the house on fire, and blow it out before you go to sleep."

"Look here," added Nicholas. "If you dare to speak to Martial about the clothes, or the box, or the copper, I will make you dance in fine style, and take away your handkerchief also."

After the departure of the children, Nicholas and his sister concealed the clothes, the box of goods, and the copper, in a small cellar approached by a few steps, the door to which was in the kitchen, near the fireplace.

"Now, mother, let us have some wine," said the bandit, and let it be of the best quality; some brandy, also. I have earned my food to-day. Bring on the supper, Calebasse; Martial may gnaw the bones—good enough for him. Let us now talk of that fellow of the quay Billy, for there will have to be hot work to-morrow or the day after, if I am to pocket the money which he has promised. But let me have some drink. By thunder! I am able to stand treat to-night."

And Nicholas again shook the five-franc pieces which he had in his pocket, threw on one side his goat-skin overcoat and his black woollen cap, and drew up to the table before a dish of stewed mutton, a piece of cold veal, and some salad.

After Calebasse had brought the wine and the brandy, the widow, invariably calm and gloomy, took her seat upon one side of the table, having Nicholas on the right and her daughter on the left, while opposite her were the vacant places of Martial and the two children. The bandit drew from his pocket a large and long Spanish knife, with a horn handle and a sharp blade, and looking at the formidable weapon, with a glance of ferocious satisfaction, said to the widow: "Cut-throat is always sharp. Hand me the bread, mother!"

"Speaking of a knife, François has found that thing in the wood-pile."

"What thing?" asked Nicholas, not understanding the allusion.

"He saw one of the feet."

"Of the man?" exclaimed Nicholas.

"Yes," said the widow, placing a slice of meat upon her son's plate.

"That's very singular: the ditch was deep. But I suppose, since that time, the earth has caved in."

"To-night we must throw everything into the river," said the widow.

"That will be safer," said Nicholas.

"We will fasten a stone to it, with a piece of the boat chain," said Calebasse.

"Not such a bad idea," said Nicholas, pouring out a glass of wine; then offering the bottle to the widow, said: "Come, let's drink to your health, mother, 'twill rouse you up."

The widow moved back her glass, shook her head, and said to her son: "Well, about that man of the quay Billy?"

"Here it is," said Nicholas, without interrupting his mastication for a moment. "After arriving at the landing, I fastened my boat and went on to the quay; seven o'clock was just striking from the military bakery at Chaillot; it was so dark that I could not see my hand before me. I walked along the quay for a quarter of an hour, when I heard some stealthy steps behind me. I walked slow, and a man enclosed in a cloak, approached me, and coughing, halted; I also halted. All that I know about his face is, that his cloak covered up his nose, and his hat concealed his eyes."

We will remind the reader, that this individual was Jacques Ferrand, the notary; who, desirous of removing Fleur-de-Marie, had this morning sent Madame Seraphin to the Martials', whom he intended to make the agents of his crime.

"'Bradamanti,' said the man," Nicholas continued. "This was the pass-word agreed upon between the old woman and myself. 'Ravageur,' I answered, by way of countersign.

"'Your name is Martial,' said he to me.

"'Yes, sir.'

"'A woman went this morning to your island. What did she say to you?'

"'She said that you wished to speak to me in behalf of M. Bradamanti.'

"'Do you wish to earn money?'

"'Yes, sir, very much.'

"'Have you a boat?'

"'We have four, sir; boatmen and ravageurs, from father to son. That's our trade, at your service.'

"'This is what you must do, if you are not afraid.'

"'Afraid of what?'

"'Of seeing some one drowned by accident, just assisting, however, the accident a little. Do you understand?'

"'You wish to have me make some lady take an accidental drink out of the Seine. Very well: as it is a delicate dish, the seasoning will be expensive.'

"'How much for two?'

"'For two? Are there two persons who are desirous of being ducked in the Seine?'

"'Yes.'

"'Five hundred francs a head. That is not dear.'

"'Agreed. A thousand francs.'

"'Paid in advance.'

"'Two hundred francs in advance: the balance afterwards.'

"'You suspect me, sir.'

"'No: you may pocket my two hundred francs without fulfilling the agreement.'

"'And you, sir, when the job is completed, and I ask you for my eight hundred francs, may say to me, 'Thank you, sir; I've had enough.''

"'There is a chance in everything. Does it suit you? Yes or no? Two hundred francs in hand; and the day after to-morrow, at nine o'clock, in this place, eight hundred more shall be paid.'

"'And how will you know that I have given the drink to the two patients?'

"'I shall know it. That's my look out. Is it agreed?'

"'It is agreed, sir.'

"'Here, take the two hundred francs. Now hear me. You will recognise the old woman, who called to see you this morning? To-morrow,

or at all events, the day after, you will see her arrive at about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the bank of the river opposite your island, with a young girl with light hair. The old woman will make you a signal by shaking her handkerchief.'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'How long a time will it take to row from the bank to your island?'

"'Full twenty minutes.'

"'Have your boats flat bottoms?'

"'Flat as my hand, sir.'

"'You will contrive, ingeniously, a large hole in the bottom of your boat, in such a manner, that by opening the hole, you may sink the boat in the twinkling of an eye. Do you understand?'

"'Perfectly, sir. You are very cunning. I have fortunately, an old boat, half rotten, which I wish to break to pieces. It will answer very well for this last voyage.'

"'You must start from your island with this boat, that is prepared for sinking. A safe boat must follow you, manned by some one of your family. You land, and take aboard the old woman and the young girl with the light hair, into the decayed boat; shove off a reasonable distance from the shore, and pretending to stoop down to arrange something, you open the hole and jump hastily into the other boat, while the old woman and the young blonde ——'

"'Drink of the same cup. All right, sir.'

"'But are you sure you will not be interfered with, should customers come to your tavern?'

"'There is no danger, sir. At that hour, and particularly in the winter, we have no customers. It is our dead season; and if they should come there, they are all tried friends, and would not trouble me.'

"'Very well. I do not wish that you should expose yourself to any jeopardy. The boat will be presumed to have sunk through rottenness, and the cargo with it. To convince yourself that both are thoroughly ducked, you might, if they should happen to float, or cling to the boat, exert all your ingenuity to save them, and ——'

"'Help them to dive again?'

"'Will it not be better to have the voyage after sunset, so that it may be quite dark when the accident happens?'

"'No, sir; for if I cannot see clear, how can I tell whether my two passengers have drank enough, or whether they need more?'

"'That is true. Then the accident must happen before the sun sets.'

"'But will not the old woman suspect anything?'

"'No. Upon meeting you, she will tell you in your ear, 'that you must drown the little one, but that when you are ready to sink the boat, to give her notice, that she may escape.' You will reply to her in such a manner, as to remove all her suspicions.'

"'So that she will think that the little blonde is the only one that is to take a drink?'

"'Yes; but she must drink with her.'

"'It is very nicely arranged.'

"'But above all, the old woman must not suspect anything.'

"'Be easy, sir; she will swallow the dose, as if 'twere honey.'

"'Good luck to you, my boy. If I am satisfied with your work, I may employ you again.'

"'At your service, sir.'"

"Upon this," continued the brigand, completing his narrative, "I left the man with the cloak, and passing by the long-boat, rifled it of the booty which you have seen."

It appears by the narrative of Nicholas, that the notary wished, by a double crime, to put to death at the same time Fleur-de-Marie and Madame Seraphin, by making the latter the victim of the snare which she supposed was solely intended for Goualeuse. It is necessary to repeat, that the notary, fearful lest at some time Chouette should reveal to Fleur-de-Marie the fact that she had been abandoned by Madame Seraphin, had determined, by her death, to prevent her from being reclaimed—a blow which would have been fatal to his fortune and reputation. By the sacrifice of Madame Seraphin, the notary relieved himself from one of the two confederates—Bradamanti being the other—who might ruin him, by ruining themselves at the same time: but Jacques Ferrand thought that the grave was a safer guardian of his secret, than even the vital interest which his accomplices had in keeping it. The mother and daughter had listened attentively to the narrative of Nicholas, who only interrupted himself to drink freely, so that his conversation now indicated the strength of his potations.

"But this is not all," continued he. "I am employed in another enterprise, with Chouette and Barbillon, of the Rue Fèves. It is a famous job, well got up; and if it don't miss, there will be something to fry, I tell you. The plan is to rob a brokeress in diamonds, who sometimes carries fifty thousand francs'-worth of precious stones in her basket."

"Fifty thousand francs!" exclaimed mother and daughter in chorus, with eyes that sparkled with avaricious greediness.

"Yes. Bras-Rouge is to be one of the party: he has decoyed the brokeress by means of a letter, which Barbillon and myself carried to the Boulevard Saint-Denis. That Bras-Rouge is a famous fellow; he is well off, and people don't suspect him. To bait the brokeress, he has already sold her a diamond worth four hundred francs. She will not suspect anything, and will come towards evening to his tavern on the Champs Elysees, and we will lie in wait for her there. Calebasse must come also, to take charge of my boat while it lays in the Seine: if we have to carry away the brokeress, dead or alive, it will be a convenient conveyance, for it leaves no track behind it. Such is Bras-Rouge's plan, and there is great depth in it."

"I have always suspected Bras-Rouge," said the widow, "after the affair of Montmartre. Your brother Ambrose was sent to Toulon, but Bras-Rouge was set at liberty."

"Because there was no proof against him: he is too cunning for that; but he never would betray a confederate."

The widow shook her head, as much as to say that she had but little confidence in the *honour* of Bras-Rouge; and after a few moments passed in reflection, she said: "I like much better the affair of the quay Billy—the plan to drown the two women to-morrow or next day. Martial will be in the way, as usual, I suppose."

"The devil's lightning will not rid us of him, then!" said Nicholas, drunk with liquor and rage, and striking his large knife into the table.

"I told mother, that we had enough of him,

and that it could not last," said Calebasse. "As long as he stays here, we are unable to do anything with the children."

"I tell you, that the brigand is capable of denouncing us some day or other," said Nicholas. "Do you hear that, mother? If you had listened to me," he added, casting a significant glance towards his mother, "all would have been over now."

"There are other means."

"That is the best," said the brigand.

"At present, no," replied the widow, in so absolute a tone, that Nicholas was silent, overawed by the influence of his mother, whom he knew to be as criminal and savage as he was himself, and much more resolute.

The widow added: "To-morrow evening, he shall leave the island for ever."

"How?" said, in one breath, Calebasse and Nicholas.

"He will soon come in: pick a quarrel with him openly to his face, in a manner that you have yet never dared to do: it will come to blows, and I know that he is strong; but there will be two of you against him, and you will have help, but let no knives be used, let no blood be shed; beat him soundly, but do not wound him."

"And after that, mother?" suggested Nicholas.

"After that, we will explain ourselves; we will tell him to leave the island to-morrow, or that the same scene shall be repeated every day. I know that an incessant fight will disgust him; thus far he has been left too tranquil."

"But he is as obstinate as a mule, and he will be likely to remain, even after that, on account of the children," said Calebasse.

"He is a great rascal, but a fight or two will not frighten him," said Nicholas.

"One or two may not, but one every day will; it will be a perfect hell, and he will give up."

"And what if he does not give up?"

"Then I have another sure way of forcing him to leave, to-night or to-morrow morning, at the latest," said the widow, with a peculiar grin.

"Truly, mother?"

"Yes; but I had rather frighten him with the fight, and if that does not succeed, the other remains."

"And if the other does not succeed, mother?"

"There is a last one which always succeeds."

Upon a sudden, the door flew open, and Martial entered.

The wind roared so loud without, that the barking of the dogs, announcing the return of the eldest son, had not been heard.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

MARTIAL entered slowly into the kitchen, in ignorance of the evil designs which were meditated against him. The few words which Louve let fall in her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie, have already given the reader an idea of the singular life which this man led. Endowed with excellent natural instincts, he was incapable of any action that was positively mean or debased; but he, nevertheless, was far from leading a regular life. He fished in violation of the laws, and his extraordinary strength and courage so overawed the guardians of the grounds, that they submitted to his trespasses, and closed their eyes to his poaching expeditions. To these illegal enterprises, Martial added another pursuit, which was hardly more commendable. A brave and dauntless man, more through excess of courage or spirit of bravado, than through cupidity, he avenged in pugilistic encounters, or in battles with clubs, those who had been the victims of some adversary's superior strength. We must add, that Martial chose the side which he vindicated, with a high regard to justice; usually becoming the champion of the weak against the strong.

The lover of Louve bore a strong resemblance to François and Amandine. He was of medium size, but robust and broad-shouldered; his short red hair, cut close, displayed to advantage his open forehead; his beard was short, thick, and hard; his cheeks broad, his nose square; and a blue and undaunted eye gave to his manly countenance an expression of great resolution and daring. He had on a tarpaulin hat, and, in spite of the severity of the weather, only wore an old blouse over his jacket, and well-worn trowsers of coarse velveteen. He carried in his hand a large knotted stick, which he deposited upon the table near him. A large dog, with spots and crooked legs, entered at the same time with Martial; but he crouched close to the door, not daring to approach the fire or the table; experience having convinced Miraut, an old companion of Martial's poaching expeditions, that neither himself nor his master were very agreeable to the family.

"Where are the children?" Such were Martial's first words, as he took his seat by the table.

"They are where they are," replied Calebasse.

"Where are the children, mother?" asked Martial, without noticing the answer of his sister.

"They have gone to bed," replied the widow, coldly.

"Did they have their supper, mother?"

"Is it any of your business?" replied Nicholas, in a rough voice, after draining a full tumbler of wine to fortify his courage, for he was rather daunted by the character and strength of his brother.

Martial appeared as indifferent to the bluster of Nicholas as he had to that of Calebasse; and again addressed his mother, saying: "I am very sorry that the children have already retired."

"So much the worse," replied the widow.

"Yes, so much the worse, for I like to have them seated by my side, while I am taking my supper."

"And as they were troublesome to us, we sent them to bed!" exclaimed Nicholas. "If you don't like it, go after them."

Martial, in surprise, fixed a glance upon his brother; but then, as if he reflected upon the foolishness of a quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut a piece of bread, and helped himself to a slice of meat. The dog now approached Nicholas, but still kept at a very respectful distance. The bandit, enraged at the contemptuous indifference of his brother, and desirous of provoking him beyond restraint, bestowed a furious kick upon Miraut, that drew from him a yelp of pain. Martial turned purple at the outrage upon the inoffensive brute. He clenched with energy the knife he held in his hand, and struck the table with violence; but curbing the excess of his anger, he called his dog gently to him: "Here, Miraut!" The dog crouched at his master's feet.

The moderation of Martial defeated the designs of Nicholas, who wished to force him into a quarrel, and he added: "I do not like dogs myself, and I wish you would take yours somewhere else."

Martial poured for himself a glass of wine, and drank it with great deliberation.

Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicholas, the mother encouraged him by a sign to continue his hostilities against Martial, under the hope that a violent quarrel would lead to a final separation. Nicholas went after the stick with which his mother had flogged François, and advancing towards the setter, said roughly, striking him a blow: "Get out, Miraut!"

Until this evening, Nicholas had always shown himself hostile to Martial, but had never dared to provoke him with so much determination and audacity. The lover of Louve was convinced that, for some concealed purpose, they wished to drive him to madness, and therefore he redoubled his coolness and indifference.

When the dog howled, from the blow given him by Nicholas, Martial left his seat, opened the door of the kitchen, and turning the dog out, returned and continued his supper. This incredible patience, so much at variance with the ordinary impetuosity of Martial's disposition, completely confounded those who were desirous of provoking him, and they looked at each other in great surprise.

"Remove the wine, Calebasse," said the widow to her daughter.

She was hastening to obey the command, when Martial said: "Wait! I have not finished my supper."

"So much the worse," said the widow, removing the bottle herself.

"Ah! that's entirely another thing," said the eldest son; and pouring out a full tumbler of water, he drank it with great relish, and, smacking his lips, said: "First-rate water!"

This supreme coolness irritated beyond endurance the already excited temper of Nicholas, stimulated by the copious libations he had imbibed. Nevertheless, he still shrank from a direct attack, convinced of the uncommon strength of his brother: he exclaimed, however, suddenly, as if delighted with the inspiration: "You have done well to turn out your dog: it is a good habit for you to fall into. You may expect to see us drive out your mistress in the same manner—to kick her into the road with our feet, as we have your dog."

"Yes, yes; for if Louve dares to come to the island after she has left the prison," said Calebasse, who understood the intention of Nicholas, "I will box her ears in a manner that she won't forget. And I will make her dive in the mud at the other end of the island, and if she rose to the top, I would thrust back the jade with my feet."

An insult addressed to the being whom he loved with all the wild violence of his nature, triumphed over the pacific resolution of Martial; his face scowled, the blood rushed to his head, the veins of his forehead became as round and hard as cords; but he had still sufficient control over himself, to say to Nicholas, in a voice that trembled with restrained passion: "Take good care of yourself; you are attempting to excite a quarrel, and you may find something which you do not expect."

"What! something to me?"

"Yes, better than the last gift which I bestowed."

"How, Nicholas?" said Calebasse, satirically; "did Martial whip you? Do you hear it, mother? I am not surprised that Nicholas is so afraid of him."

"He whipped me, because he took me by surprise," said Nicholas, turning pale with rage.

"You lie: you attempted to take me by surprise, but I flogged you, nevertheless, and should have beaten you more, if I had not taken compassion upon you. But I now give you warning, that if you dare to use again insulting language towards my mistress—do you hear?—I will show you no mercy, but flog you within an inch of your life."

"And supposing—that I choose to speak of her?" said Calebasse.

"I'll make your ears ring by way of warning; and if you repeat the provocation, I will box them again."

"And what will you do to me, if I speak of her," said the widow, slowly.

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"You?" repeated Martial, imposing upon himself a strong restraint; "you!"

"You will beat me also, will you not?"

"No; but if you insult Louve, I will flog Nicholas. Now, proceed; it is your concern and his also."

"You will flog me, will you?" said the bandit, elevating his formidable Spanish knife; "you will flog me?"

"No knives, Nicholas!" exclaimed the mother, rising quickly, to seize the arm of her son; but intoxicated with fury and with liquor, he pushed back his mother's arm, and rushed upon his brother.

Martial stepped back suddenly, and seized the large knotted stick which he had left on the table, and put himself in an attitude of defence.

"No knives, Nicholas!" repeated the widow.

"Leave him alone," said Calebasse, arming herself with the hatchet.

Nicholas, with his knife brandished in the air, was watching for a favourable moment to rush upon his brother.

"I tell you, and your jade of a she-wolf, that I will slaughter you both, and I begin. At him, mother! at him, Calebasse! let us cool him; he has been master long enough." And believing the moment favourable for an attack, the brigand rushed upon his brother, knife in hand.

Martial, expert in the management of a stick, moved back one step, raised his stick with the rapidity of lightning, and whirling it round over his head, in such a manner as to describe the figure eight, let it fall with so much force upon the arm of Nicholas, that the arm dropped, and the knife fell from his hand.

"Brigand, you have broken my arm!" said he, taking hold of the right arm, which fell helplessly by his side, with his left hand.

"No, I felt the rebound of the stick," replied Martial, kicking the knife under the side-board; then taking advantage of the disabled condition of his antagonist, he seized him by the collar, and pushing him back suddenly, as far as the door of the small cellar to which we have alluded, he opened it with one hand, and with the other threw in his brother, and locked him up, before he had recovered his surprise at the suddenness of the attack. Turning then towards the Amazons, he seized Calebasse by the shoulders, and in spite of her resistance and her cries,

in spite of a slight wound which she inflicted upon his hand with a blow from the hatchet, he shut her up in a lower room of the tavern, which communicated with the kitchen. Then turning towards the widow, who was stupefied at manœuvres as skilful as they were unexpected, Martial said to her coolly: "Now, mother, it is between you and I."

"Yes, it is between you and I," said the widow, as her callous face became animated, and her eyes sparkled, and her death-like complexion kindled with a flush of anger. Rage, fury, imparted an awful expression to her hideous face. "Yes, it is between you and I," said she, in a menacing voice; "I have a long time waited for this moment, and you shall now learn what has been for a long time smouldering in my heart."

"And I will tell you, also, what I have in my heart."

"If you should live for a hundred years, you will not forget this night."

"I shall remember that, upon it, my brother and sister wished to murder me, and that my mother did nothing to prevent it; but let us hear what you have to say against me."

"Since the death of your father, your life has been a continued display of sneaking baseness!"

"Mine?"

"Yes, coward! instead of assisting us to support the family, you run off to Rambouillet, to poach in the woods with that game pedlar whom you knew at Bercy."

"If I had remained at home, I should now have been in the galleys, like Ambrose; or about to be there, like Nicholas; or a thief, like you and Calebasse; and that is the cause of your hatred."

"And, pray, what is your trade? You steal game, you steal fish—theft without danger—the theft of a coward!"

"Nobody can claim property in fish or game, which run free. To-day they belong to one man, the next day to another. It is his property who knows how to catch it. I do not, therefore, steal; as to being a coward ——"

"You thrash, for money, people who are weaker than yourself."

"Because they have beaten others who are weaker than themselves."

"The trade of a coward! yes, of a coward!"

"There may be more honest trades, it is true; but it does not lie in your mouth to speak against anybody's trade."

"Why don't you employ yourself in some honest occupation, instead of coming here to sponge your living out of us?"

"I give you the fish which I take, and the money that I earn; to be sure it is not much, but it is enough to pay for all that I cost you. I attempted to become a locksmith, and earn more; but when one has been a vagabond from childhood, on the river and in the woods, it is not such an easy thing to buckle down to a trade: it is, in fact, all over with me—finished for life," added Martial, with a gloomy tone. "I always preferred to live alone, on the water or in the woods, where nobody can ask me any questions; for if some inquisitive person asks me about my father, what can I answer? Guillotined. Of my brother? At the galleys. Of my sister? A thief."

"And what do you say of your mother?"

"What do I say?"

"Yes, what?"

"I say that she is dead."

"And you do well; it is the same thing, in fact: I am dead to you, craven—I disown you. Your brother is at the galleys; your grandfather and father laid their heads bravely upon the scaffold, laughing in the face of both priest and executioner, and, instead of avenging them, you sneak away like a coward."

"Avenge them!"

"Yes, show yourself to be a true Martial. Spit on the guillotine and the executioner, and die like father, mother, brother, and sister."

However accustomed Martial had been to the ferocious enthusiasm of his mother, he could not resist a shudder at the awful expression of the widow of the executed man, while speaking these words. She continued, with even increasing rage: "Oh! coward, and more of a sneak than a coward, you desire to be honest! If you are honest, will you not be eternally rebuked and despised, as the son of an assassin, the brother of a galley slave? but, instead of firing your heart with vengeance, it curdles it with fear; instead of turning at bay and fighting like a bull-dog, when your father was beheaded, you skulked away; when you knew that we could not leave the island and go to town, without being hooted at in the streets, and pelted with stones, like mad dogs. I will pay them for it, do you hear me? I will pay them for it!"

"One man, ten men cannot frighten me; but I cannot stand insults from everybody, as the son and brother of condemned criminals. No, no—I could not remain; I preferred to go in the woods and poach with Peton, the game huckster."

"Why did you not stick to the woods?"

"I came away partly on account of a difficulty with a gamekeeper, but more particularly for the children's sake, who are now of an age to be corrupted by example."

"What do you care about them?"

"What do I care? I do not wish them to become felons, like Nicholas and Calebasse."

"You don't say so!"

"Left alone with you, they could not fail to become as bad as the best of you. I applied myself to a trade, with the hope of being able to earn enough to support the children and take them with me from the island; but in Paris, the disgrace entailed upon me was known by everybody. It was always 'Son of a guillotined man—brother of a galley slave;' and I had so many fights to wipe off these insults, that I was completely disgusted."

"And if honesty disgusted you, 'twas a suitable punishment for not joining us, and becoming what we are, and what the children will be in spite of you—yes, in spite of you. You think to catch them by your preaching, but we are on the look-out. François is already one of us; just give him a chance, and he will join the gang."

"I tell you it will not be so."

"I know better: he is vicious by nature; you only stand in his way. As for Amandine, when she reaches the age of fifteen, she will be able to go alone. They have hooted us, they have flung stones at us—they will find that there is no cowardice in our family, but what you carry in your heart; you are the only disgrace to the name of Martial."*

*These frightful lessons are, unhappily, not exaggerated. We read the following in the excellent report of M. de Bretignères, on the penitentiary in the colony of Mettray

"What a shame!"

"And as there is danger of our corrupting you, you must go away to-morrow, and never return."

Martial looked upon his mother for a moment in silence, and then said to her: "You instigated the quarrel with me during supper-time, in order to arrive at this point."

"Yes, to show you what you are to expect, if you remain here against our will. It will be to you a hell—yes, a hell! Every day there will be insults, bloody fights; and we shall not always be alone as we have been to-night—we shall have friends to help us, and you will not be able to stand it more than a week."

"You think that you are going to frighten me away, do you?"

"I only tell you what will happen to you."

"I care not, I shall remain."

"You will remain! You will remain, you say?"

"Yes."

"Against our will?"

"In spite of you, Calebasse, Nicholas, or any other scoundrel of your gang."

"You make me laugh!"

The language was dreadful, when contrasted with the fiendish expression of the woman.

"I tell you that I shall remain here until I find the means of earning my living elsewhere, and supporting the children. If I were alone, I should have no trouble: I could return to the woods. But on account of François and Amandine, I shall need more time to discover what I am now looking for. In the meantime, I shall remain here."

"You will remain until you are able to carry away the children?"

"You speak my mind precisely."

"You intend to remove the children, then?"

"When I ask, they will come—yes, come running: I will answer for that."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and said: "I told you, that if you should live a hundred years, you would remember this night. I will now explain to you the reason; but before I do it, tell me whether you are determined to remain."

"Yes, yes!—a thousand times, yes!"

"You will soon say: 'No, no!—a thousand times, no!' Just listen to me attentively for a moment. Do you know what trade your brother follows?"

"I can guess at it pretty shrewdly; but I do not know his trade."

"Then you shall know now: he steals for a living."

"So much the worse for him."

"And for you also."

"For me?"

"If he breaks open a house in the night-time, it will send him to the galleys. We receive the goods which he steals; and if we are discovered, we are sent there with him, and you also, as receivers of stolen goods. The family being all *jugged*, the children will be turned into the streets, to learn there the trade of their father and grandfather, better than they could learn it at home."

"On what proof should I be arrested as an accomplice?"

"No one knows how you live: you wander about the river; you have the reputation of being a vagrant; you live with us, and every one will believe that you are privy to our thefts."

"I will prove the contrary."

"We will accuse you of being an accomplice."

"Accuse me! Why will you do that?"

"As a reward for remaining here against our will."

"A moment ago you wished to frighten me one way, now you are trying another tack. But it won't do. I can prove that I have never stolen. I shall remain."

"You will remain, will you? Listen to me further. Do you remember what took place on Christmas night, last year?"

"Christmas night?" said Martial, attempting to recall it to his memory.

"Think, recollect."

"I cannot."

"Do you not remember that Bras-Rouge brought here a well-dressed man, who wished to conceal himself?"

"Yes, I now remember it. But I went up to bed, and left him at supper with you. He passed the night here, and in the morning, Nicholas went with him to Saint-Ouen."

"Are you sure that Nicholas took him to Saint-Ouen?"

"You told me so in the morning."

"You were here then, at Christmas?"

"Yes: what of it?"

"That very night the man, who carried a vast sum of money with him, was murdered in this house."

"Murdered here!"

"Murdered, robbed, and buried in the small wood-house."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Martial, turning pale with terror, and discrediting the horrible atrocity of this new crime. "I do not believe it; you are attempting to frighten me again."

"Ask your *protegé*, Francois, what he saw in the wood-house this morning."

"Francois—and what did he see?"

"One of the feet of the man sticking out of the ground. Take the lantern, and see it for yourself."

"No, no," said Martial, wiping the perspiration from his brow, "I cannot believe it; you say this to ——"

"To prove to you, that if you remain here against our will, you run the risk every moment of being arrested as an accomplice of both theft and murder. You were here on last Christmas night. We will allege that you assisted us in the deed; and how can you prove the contrary?"

"Great God!" exclaimed Martial, hiding his face with his hands.

"Will you remain now?" said the widow, with sardonic laughter.

(session of March 12th, 1843):—"The civil state of our colonists is important to relate. Among them we count thirty-two natural children; thirty-four whose parents are married again; fifty-one *whose parents are in prison;* one hundred and twenty-four whose parents have not been pursued by justice, but who are plunged in the greatest poverty.

"These figures are eloquent and replete with information; they permit us to go from effects to causes, and afford a hope of stopping the progress of an evil, the origin of which is thus demonstrated.

"The number of criminal parents gives an idea of the education which those children must have received under the care of such tutors. Trained to evil by their fathers, the sons have fallen under their control, and believed themselves doing well in following their fathers' example. Overtaken by justice, they resign themselves to prison, to share the fate of their family; they bring there only the emulation of vice, and we must admit that the light of Divine grace still shines in the more rough and coarse natures, so that all honest impulse is not altogether extinguished."

Martial was completely overpowered by what his mother had just disclosed. He could not doubt the correctness of her statements, nor the plausibility of her inference. His vagrant life, his sojourn with the guilty family, would be strong evidence against him, and the suspicion would become demonstration in the eyes of justice, if his mother, brother, and sister, swore that he was their accomplice.

The widow enjoyed the horror of her son. "There is a way of escaping," said she to him: "denounce us."

"I ought to do it; but you know very well that I will not."

"That is the reason why I made a full disclosure to you. Will you go now?"

Martial now attempted to move this Megæra, by a kind appeal, and said to her, in a softened tone: "My mother, I cannot believe you capable of that murder!"

"Just as you please; but leave this place."

"I will go, on one condition."

"I will not listen to it."

"Send the children to learn some trade, far distant from this place, in the provinces."

"They shall remain here."

"When you have made them, mother, like Nicholas, Calebasse, Ambrose, and my father, what good will it do you?"

"To help in some good jobs we have on hand. There are not enough of us yet. Calebasse must remain with me, to take care of the tavern. Nicholas has therefore to go alone. When Francois and Amandine become well trained, they will be of great service to him—for stones have been flung at them also; and although they were quite small, they deserve to have some revenge."

"Mother, you love Calebasse and Nicholas, do you not?"

"Proceed."

"Let the children imitate them. Let your crimes and theirs be discovered."

"Proceed."

"They will be sent to the scaffold, like my father."

"Go on, go on."

"And are you not terrified at the anticipation of such a fate?"

"Their fate and mine will be the same, neither better nor worse. I steal, they steal; I murder, they murder; he who catches the mother will catch all the brood. If our heads fall, they will all fall in the same basket, where they can bid each other farewell. There is no backing out here. You are the only coward in the family, and you are disowned by us. Go away."

"But the children—the children!"

"The children will grow up in the way in which they have started. Francois is already ripe, and when you are once away, Amandine will rapidly make up for what she has lost."

"I entreat you, mother, to consent to send away the children, that they may learn a trade."

"How many times must I repeat, that they are *learning a trade here?*"

The widow articulated these final words in a manner so determined and resolute, that Martial lost all hope of softening the soul of his mother.

"Since you have made up your mind," replied he, "listen to me, mother, attentively, in your turn. I will remain."

"Indeed!"

"Not in this house, for I should be assassinated by Nicholas, or poisoned by Calebasse; but as I have no means at present of providing a lodging elsewhere for myself and the children, we will live in the hut at the end of the island: the door is already strong, and I can make it still stronger. Once inside, with my dog, my gun, and my stick, and I shall be in no fear of a mortal living. To-morrow, I shall take the children. They will be constantly with me, whether I am in the boat or out of it. At night they will sleep in the hut, and we can live on the fish which I take, until I can provide for them a place elsewhere."

"Do you say so?"

"Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calebasse, can prevent it, if your crimes are discovered. I can say that I only sojourned upon the island to prevent the children from being trained up for the galleys or the guillotine, like the rest of the family. But, may the lightnings strike me, if I leave the island, and the children remain a day longer in this house! Yes! and I defy you and all your friends to force me from this place!"

The widow was well acquainted with the resolute character of Martial. The children were affectionately attached to their eldest brother, and would follow him, in spite of her, wherever he invited them. As for him, always well armed, intrepid, on his guard, in his boat during the day, or barricaded in his hut at night, he could not fear any harm from the enmity of the family. The project of Martial would very probably be carried into execution; but the widow had many reasons for preventing it. As honest artisans consider their children as an element of their wealth, on account of the service which they expect from them, in the same manner the widow regarded Amandine and Francois, as producing auxiliaries, by means of their crimes. In the next place, her thirst for vengeance on account of the execution of her husband, was as strong as she had represented it. Certain beings, educated in crime, and hardened in iniquity, are always in revolt, or in desperate war against society; and they think that new crimes will avenge the just punishment which has been inflicted upon the past enormities of their friends. Finally, the criminal designs of Nicholas against Fleur-de-Marie and the brokeress might be interrupted by the presence of his brother. The widow had expected that either the threat of an incessant domestic broil, or the disclosure to Martial of the danger he ran of being regarded as an accomplice of their crimes, would certainly drive him from the island. As cunning as she was penetrating, the widow now found that she must resort to treachery, in order that her son might become the victim of a bloody stratagem; and after a long silence, she said to him, with affected bitterness: "I understand your project: you do not wish to denounce us yourself, you wish to have us denounced by the children."

"I!"

"They know now there is a man buried here; they know that Nicholas has stolen. Once apprenticed, they will speak out, and we shall be seized and executed, every one of us—you, as well as we. See what would happen, if I should listen to you, and if I were to allow you to place the children elsewhere. And yet you say, that you do not wish me any harm. I do not ask you to love me, but do not hasten the moment when we shall be taken."

The subdued tone of the widow induced Martial to believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect upon her. What a snare he fell

into! "I know the children," he replied. "I am sure that on my telling them to say nothing, they will say nothing. At any rate, one way or the other, I shall always be with them, and I can always answer for their silence."

"Who can answer for the words of a child?—especially in Paris, where the people are so curious and so babbling. It is as much that they may aid us in our designs, as that they may be unable to betray us, that I wish to keep them here."

"May they not go sometimes from the village to Paris? Who is to prevent them from speaking, if they are required to do so? If they were far from here—and would to Heaven they were!—whatever they might say, could do no harm."

"Far, far from here! and where?" said the widow, looking fixedly at her son.

"Leave me to take care of them. It matters little to you."

"How will you live, and with them too?"

"My old locksmith is a brave man! I will tell him what he must say; and perhaps he may take an interest in the children. I will put them out as apprentices far from here. We shall part in two days, and you shall no longer speak of them."

"Indeed! I wish them to stay with me; I shall be more sure of them."

"Then I shall establish myself to-morrow, in the barracks upon the island. I also have a head, you know."

"Yes, I know it. Oh! how I wish to see you far from here. Why do you not live in the woods?"

"I offer to relieve you of myself and the children."

"Will you then desert Louve, whom you love so much?" said the widow, suddenly.

"That is my business. I know what I have to do: I have my own private plans."

"If I were to let you carry away Amandine and François, would you never allow them to set foot in Paris again?"

"Before three days we shall be gone, and, as it were, *dead* to you."

"I would prefer that to having you here, and living in perpetual distrust of them. Come, since they must be given up, take them away, and be off, all of you, as quickly as possible. May I never see you again!"

"Do you say so?"

"I do. Give me the key of the cavern, that I may open it for Nicholas."

"No; he will sleep himself sober. I will give you the key to-morrow morning."

"And Calebasse?"

"That is a different case. Open it for her when I am gone. She abhors the sight of me."

"Begone!—my curses on you!"

"Good evening, mother."

"Good evening."

"This will be the last, fortunately," said Martial.

"The last," replied the widow.

Her son lighted a candle, then opening the kitchen door, called his dog, which ran to him, fawningly, from without, and followed its master to the upper part of the house.

"Begone! Your business is settled," murmured the mother, showing her son her fist, as he went up-stairs. "This is for you, when you want it." Then, aided by Calebasse, who went to seek a bunch of false keys, the widow opened the cavern where Nicholas was, and immediately set him at liberty.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANÇOIS AND AMANDINE.

FRANÇOIS and Amandine slept in a room directly over the kitchen, at the extremity of a corridor, into which several other chambers opened, serving as private rooms for the frequenters of the tavern.

After having eaten their frugal supper, instead of extinguishing their lamp, according to the widow's orders, the two children had watched, leaving their door half-open to light their brother Martial in the passage, when he should come back into the room.

Placed upon a broken stool, the lantern cast a pale light through its transparent sides. The walls of plaster were lighted up by a few straggling rays; there was a truckle-bed for François, and an old bed for Amandine, which was too short for her; there were broken chairs, and broken benches, which had suffered violence from the turbulent guests of the tavern of the Ravageur's Island: such was the interior of the place. Amandine, seated upon the side of the truckle-bed, tried to dress her hair in *marmotte* style with a stolen handkerchief, the gift of Nicholas. François held a piece of a broken mirror before his sister, who, with her head turned half-round, was engaged in arranging the large rosette which she had made in knotting the two corners of her handkerchief.

Very much astonished at this head-dress, François neglected, for an instant, to hold the glass before his sister.

"Raise the mirror a little higher," said Amandine. "Now I don't see myself any better. There—good! Wait a little—wait till I have finished. Ah, look!—how do you think I am dressed?"

"Oh, very well, very well! La! what a beautiful rosette! You will make me one like that in my neckcloth, won't you?"

"Yes, directly—but just let me walk a bit. You go before me, backwards, keeping the mirror as high as possible, so that I may be able to see myself marching."

François executed, as well as he was able, this difficult manœuvre, to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted about, triumphant and glorious, under the bows and enormous ear-knot of her cap. Innocent and simple as this conduct would have been under other circumstances, it was sinful now, because François and Amandine knew very well that the object of their vanity had been stolen; another proof of the fearful facility with which even children who are well educated are almost unconsciously corrupted, when they are continually stifled by an atmosphere of crime.

We have said, moreover, that their brother Martial, the only Mentor of these unhappy children, was himself not free from reproach: though incapable of committing a theft or a murder, he led an irregular and vagabond life. Doubtless he revolted at the crimes of his family; he tenderly loved the two children; he still defended them from bad treatment; he endeavoured to shelter them from his family's pernicious influence: but, not being sustained by the precepts of a rigorous and strict morality, his advice was but a frail safeguard to the objects of his care. They refused to commit certain bad actions, not

from any honest conviction, but to obey Martial, whom they loved, and disobey their mother, whom they shunned and detested. As to notions of justice and injustice, they had none whatever, familiarized as they were with the detestable examples which were constantly before their eyes—for, as we have said, this rural tavern, the resort of the very refuse of the population, was a theatre of low orgies, of foul debauchery, and Martial, hostile as he was to theft and murder, did not hesitate to exhibit himself at these demoniac revels — the moral instincts of the children, especially those of François, were most doubtful, vacillating, and unstable. They had reached that dangerous period when the soul, suspended between good and evil, may in one moment be for ever ruined or for ever saved.

"How well this red handkerchief becomes you, sister!" said François; "how very pretty it is! When we go and play in the sand before the plaster-kiln, you must rig yourself up in this fashion, so as to plague the children who are always throwing stones at us, and calling us little scape-gallowses. And then I will put on my beautiful red cravat, and we'll tell them that it is not any matter, for they haven't got such elegant silk handkerchiefs as we have."

"But, I say, François," said Amandine, after a moment's reflection, "suppose they find out that the handkerchiefs we have on are stolen, they will call us little thieves."

"Why should it trouble us, if they do call us thieves?"

"Because it is true—it is all the same."

"Nicholas gave us these handkerchiefs, and we did not steal them."

"But Nicholas stole them from a boat, and our brother Martial says it is wicked to steal."

"But if Nicholas stole them, that is not our fault."

"Do you think so, François?"

"Certainly, I do."

"I would much rather that they had been given to me by the person to whom they belonged, and wouldn't you, François?"

"It is all the same thing to me—they are gifts, and they are ours."

"You are very sure of that?"

"Yes, yes—be quiet, then."

"It is very well, if we have done nothing which brother Martial has forbidden; and we have such elegant handkerchiefs."

"Say, Amandine; suppose Martial had known that Calebasse made you take a four-cornered neckerchief from the pedlar's pack, the other day, when he was looking another way."

"Ah! François, don't tell him that!" said the poor child, with her eyes full of tears; "brother Martial won't love us any longer, you know, and he will leave us here all alone."

"Never do you fear. Do you think I'm going to tell him? You make me laugh."

"Don't laugh at that, François; I have been so sorry about it. But I was obliged to do it; sister pinched me till the blood came, and she made such dreadful eyes at me! My heart failed me twice, and I thought I could never do it. After all, the pedlar did not discover it, and sister kept the neckerchief. But if they had found me out, François, they would have put me in prison."

"But they did not find you out: it is all the same as if you had not stolen it."

"Do you think so?"

"To be sure."

"How wretched they must be in prison!"

"No such thing."

"How is that, François?—isn't it so?"

"Just hear this! You know that big cripple who lives at Paris, at Father Micou's house, Nicholas's agent, who keeps a boarding-house in Paris, in the passage Brasserie?"

"A big cripple?"

"Yes, who came here late in the autumn, on business for Father Micou, with a monkey showman and two women."

"Oh, yes! the big cripple, who spent such heaps and heaps of money."

"I really believe he paid for everybody! You recollect the water-parties, and how I managed so as to have the monkey showman in the boat, to play music on his organ?"

"And then, François, what splendid fireworks they sent up in the evening!"

"And the big cripple was not mean—he gave me ten sous for myself! he never drank any but sealed wine; they had chickens at every meal; he had not less than eighty francs."

"What! so much, François?"

"Oh, yes!"

"He was very rich, then?"

"Not at all: what he had, was money which he had gained in prison, from which he had just come out."

"And he gained all that money in prison?"

"Yes: he said that he still had seven hundred francs; that when it was all done, he would do some good job, and that, if he did not succeed, it was quite the same to him, as he would return to his jolly old jail companions."

"He was not afraid of the prison, then, François?"

"On the contrary, he said to Calebasse that they are there a party of friends and revellers; that he had never enjoyed a more comfortable bed or better nourishment than in prison; good meat four times a week, fire all winter, and a fair sum of money when they leave; but that there are some honest working-people who live on hunger and cold when they can get no work."

"Oh! François, did the cripple man say so?"

"I heard him distinctly: I was rowing in the boat when he related his history to Calebasse and the two women, who said that females also received good treatment in prison. They had just come out, and they ought to know."

"But then, François, can it be that there is any harm in stealing, since the prison is such an excellent place?"

"Mercy! I don't know, for my part. Here there is no one who says it is wicked to steal, but our brother Martial; perhaps he may be wrong."

"It is quite the same; we must believe him, François: he loves us so much."

"He loves us, it is true; when he is here, no one beats us. If he had been here this evening, mother would not have whipped me so much. The old beast! how wicked she is! Oh, how I hate her!—how I hate her! How I wish I were grown up, that I might pay her back for all the blows she has given me—for all that she has given you too, who are weaker than myself."

"Oh! François, be quiet; it makes me afraid to hear you speak so of our mother — to say you would beat her," cried the poor little creature, weeping, and throwing her arms round her brother's neck, and embracing him tenderly.

"No—it is true, very true," replied François,

gently putting Amandine away. "Why do mother and Calebasse treat us so tyrannically?"

"I don't know," replied Amandine, drawing her hand across her eyes; "it is, perhaps, because they have taken our brother Ambrose to the galleys, and guillotined our father, that they are so unjust to us."

"Is that our fault?"

"My God! no: but what would you have?"

"Why, if I were to be always treated in this way, always with blows, at last I would prefer to steal, as they wish us to do. What good does it do me to abstain from stealing?"

"And what will Martial say?"

"Oh, I shall do it, without his permission. I have taken his advice too long, if I am only to be whipped in this style every day. Think of this evening—never was mother so wicked; she was like a fury! It was as dark as pitch, and she did not speak a word; I only felt her cold hand grasping me by the neck, while she flogged me with the other; and then it seemed to me that her eyes flashed."

"Poor François! for having said that you had seen a bone of a dead man in the cellar."

"Yes—a foot, which stuck out of the earth," said François, trembling with affright; "I am very certain."

"Perhaps there may once have been a cemetery here—don't you think so?"

"Possibly; but then, why did our mother say that she would whip me again, if I should speak of the dead man's bone to my brother Martial? You see, the truth is, somebody has been killed in a dispute, and they have buried him here to prevent the death from being known."

"You are right; do you remember a terrible calamity that happened here?"

"When?"

"You know the time when M. Barbillon struck the great lean man with his knife? How lean he was! he exhibited himself for money."

"Ah! yes; the walking skeleton, as they called him. My mother came to separate them: but for her, perhaps M. Barbillon would have killed the lean man. Did you see how he foamed, and how his eyes seemed to start from his head, at Barbillon?"

"Oh, he would not be afraid to strike you with his knife for nothing; he is such a wild fellow."

"So young and so wicked, François?"

"Tortillard is younger, but he would be quite as wicked if he were as big."

"Oh, yes, he is very wicked. The other day he whipped me, because I would not play with him."

"Did he indeed beat you? Well, the first time he comes ——"

"No, no; you see, François, it was in fun."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, but I do not know how he manages his game, and how he has so much money. Is he lucky? The time when he came home with Chouette, he showed us some pieces of gold, and twenty francs. He had a contemptuous air when he said to us, 'You would be equally well off, if you were not little saints.'"

"Yes, in slang, that means beasts or idiots."

"Oh, yes, it is true."

"Forty francs in gold! how many fine things I shall be able to buy with that—and you, Amandine?"

"Oh, yes, me also!"

"What will you buy?"

"Let me see," said the child, looking down with a meditating air; "I will first buy a good overcoat for my brother Martial, nice and warm, that he shall never be cold in his boat."

"But for yourself—for yourself?"

"I should like very much to have that little Jesus in wax, with his lamb and his cross, which the plaster merchant had last Sunday—you know—under the porch of the church of Asnières."

"By the way, you mustn't tell mother or Calebasse that we were ever in a church."

"True enough; she has always forbidden us to go inside of one. What a pity! for a church is so very beautiful inside; isn't it François?"

"Yes! what elegant silver chandeliers!"

"And the portrait of the Holy Virgin, how kindly it looks!"

"And the fine lamps—did you see them? and the fine cloth on the table at the farther end, where the priest said mass with his two friends, dressed just like himself, who gave him bread and wine?"

"Say, François, don't you remember, last year, when we saw from here all the little communicants, in their white veils, pass over the bridge? What sweet bouquets they had!"

"And how sweetly they sang as they marched on, holding the ribbons of the banner!"

"And how the silver embroidery of their banner glistened in the sun! How much it must have cost!"

"Dear me! wasn't it lovely, eh, François?"

"Indeed it was; and the communicants with their bows of white satin, and their wax tapers with handles of gold and crimson velvet."

"And the little boys, they had a banner also, had they not, François? Oh! dear, how I was whipped that day for asking mother why we did not walk in the procession with the other children."

"It was then that they forbade us ever to go into a church when we went to the market-place, or to Paris, unless it was to steal from the poor-box, or the pockets of the parishioners, while they were listening to mass," said Calebasse, grinning and showing her yellow teeth.

"Bah! what a wicked beast!"

"Oh! steal in a church; they shall kill me first; don't you say so, François?"

"There or elsewhere; what difference does it make, when you are once decided?"

"I cannot tell the reason why, but I should be much more afraid."

"On account of the priests, I suppose."

"No; on account, perhaps, of the picture of the Holy Virgin, which looks so mild and so good."

"What do you care for the picture?—it will not eat you up."

"But I cannot help it; it is not my fault."

"Speaking of priests," said Amandine, "do you remember the time when Nicholas boxed me on the ears because he saw me bow to the curate? I did not know that it was wrong."

"Yes; but brother Martial agreed with Nicholas, that it was not necessary to bow to priests."

At this moment steps were heard in the passage.

Martial was returning to his room, without suspicion, after his conversation with his mother, under the impression that Nicholas would remain imprisoned until morning. Perceiving a ray of light through the door of the children's room, which was partially open, he entered there.

[François and Amandine.]

They both hastened to meet him, and he kissed them affectionately.

"Why have you not gone to bed, you young chatterers?"

"We were waiting to see you go to your room, and bid you good night," said Amandine.

"Besides, we heard loud voices down stairs, as if people were disputing," added François.

"Yes," said Martial; "I had some words with Nicholas; but I am glad to find you up, as I have some news for you."

"For us, brother?"

"Would you like to leave this place with me, and go very far away?"

"Oh, yes, brother!"

"Yes, brother!"

"Well, within a few days we three shall leave the island."

"What happiness!" exclaimed Amandine, striking her hands together in ecstacy.

"And where shall we go?" asked François.

"You will see, inquisitive one. But never mind where we go. You shall learn a good trade, which will enable you to earn a living, that is certain."

"Shall I no longer fish with you, brother?"

"No; you will become an apprentice to some cabinet-maker or locksmith. You are skilful and strong, and after a year you will earn something. But what is the matter with you?—you do not seem pleased?"

"It is because ——"

"Well, speak out."

"I should rather fish with you, and mend your nets, than learn a trade."

"Indeed!"

"To be shut up all day in a workshop is gloomy, and to become an apprentice is tiresome."

Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"Is it better to be idle, to be a vagabond and a skulker, until you are old enough to become a thief?" said Martial, severely.

"No, brother; but I should like to live with you elsewhere, in the same manner that we live here; that's all."

"Yes, that's it—to drink, eat, sleep, and fish, like a gentleman."

"I should like that better."

"That's very possible; but would you not like something else? I see that it is high time, my poor François, that I should take you from this place; for, without being yourself aware of it, you will soon be as bad as the rest. My mother was right—you are vicious, I fear: and you, Amandine, would you not like to learn a trade?"

"Oh, yes, my brother! I should like much to learn a trade; I should prefer anything to living here. I shall be rejoiced to go away with you and François."

"But what have you got on your head, my girl?" said Martial, observing the gaudy head-gear of his sister.

"A silk handkerchief which Nicholas gave me."

"He gave me one also," said François, proudly.

"And where did the handkerchiefs come from? Twould surprise me, if Nicholas had expended any money to make a present to you."

The two children hung down their heads without replying.

In a moment, François replied, resolutely: "Nicholas gave them to us; we do not know where they came from; do we Amandine?"

"No, brother," said the girl, hesitating and blushing, and not venturing to raise her eyes to Martial.

"Do not lie," said Martial, severely.

"We do not lie!" exclaimed François, boldly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, with an affectionate tone.

"Well, to tell the whole truth," said the girl, timidly, "these beautiful handkerchiefs came from a box of articles which Nicholas brought this evening in his boat."

"And which he stole?"

"I believe he did, brother, from a long-boat."

"You see, François, that you were lying."

The child cast down his eyes without uttering a word.

"Give me your handkerchief, Amandine, and yours, François."

The young girl took off her head-gear, cast a glance at the large knot which was still untied, and surrendered her handkerchief to Martial, smothering a sigh of regret. François also drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and, like his sister, surrendered it to Martial.

"To-morrow morning," said the brother, "I will return the handkerchiefs to Nicholas. You never should have accepted of them: to take a thing that is stolen, is as bad as stealing."

"It's a great pity—the handkerchiefs are very pretty," said François.

"When you have a trade, and earn money by your work, you can buy handkerchiefs as handsome as these. Come, go to bed; it is late, my children."

"You are not angry, are you, my brother?" asked Amandine, timidly.

"No, no, my child; it is not your fault. You are living with wicked people, and you are very apt to act like them, without knowing that it is wrong. When you are with honest people, you will behave like them; and you shall soon be with honest people, or may the devil catch me! Good night, my children."

"Good night, brother."

Martial kissed the children, and they were left alone.

"What is the matter with you, François? You look quite sad," said Amandine.

"Brother took away my handsome handkerchief, and besides, did you not hear? He wishes to take us away, and make us learn a trade."

"Don't you like it?"

"No, indeed."

"Do you like better to stay here and be flogged every day?"

"I am flogged, but at any rate I do not work. I spend the whole day in the boat, or fishing, or playing, or waiting on the customers, who sometimes give me something, as the big cripple did. It is much more amusing than to be shut up, from morning to evening, in a workshop, toiling away like a dog."

"But did you not hear brother say, that if we remained here any longer, we should become very wicked?"

"Well, what do I care? since other children already call us little thieves, little guillotines. Besides, it is tedious to work."

"But here we are flogged all the time, brother!"

"We are flogged because we pay more attention to what Martial says than to what the others say."

"He is so kind to us."

"He is very kind—I do not deny that, I love him very much. He takes us to walk, and they dare not harm us in his presence. But then he never gives us anything."

"It is because he has got nothing. What he earns he gives to our mother for his board."

"Nicholas has got something, and I am sure if we obeyed him and our mother, they would not treat us so harshly. They would give us fine clothes, as they did to-night. They would not suspect us in the manner that they do now, and we should have money like little Tortillard."

"Yes, but we should have to steal, and that would displease our brother Martial."

"Well, what of that?"

"Oh, François! if we were caught, we should be put in prison."

"To be in prison is no worse than to be shut up all day in a workshop. It is the same thing. Besides, the big cripple says there is a great deal of fun in a prison."

"But you do not think of the sorrow we should cause Martial, for it is for our sake that he came back here, and remains here. If it were not for us, he would be in no trouble; he would go back to the woods and poach, which he likes so much."

"Well, let him take us with him in the woods—that would be the best thing. I should be with him whom I love so much, and I should not be at work, nor bound to a trade, which is a bore."

The conversation of Amandine and François was now interrupted. The door was locked upon the outside by some one.

"They have locked us in!" exclaimed François.

"Good heaven! Why have they done it, brother? What do they intend to do to us?"

"Perhaps 'tis Martial."

"Hark! hark!—his dog is barking," said Amandine, listening attentively.

In a few moments, François added: "One

would say that they are striking against his door with a hammer. Perhaps they wish to break it open."

"Yes, yes; and the dog continues barking."

"Hark, François! It seems as if they were nailing up something. How scared I am! What can they be doing to our brother? Hark how the dog howls now!"

"All is quiet now, Amandine," said François, keeping close to the door.

The two children held their breath in great anxiety.

"Now they are coming out of my brother's room. I hear their footsteps in the passage."

"Let us throw ourselves into our bed; our mother will kill us if she finds that we are still up," said Amandine, in terror.

"No," said François, listening all the time; "they have just passed before our door, and are now running down stairs."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what can have happened?"

"They have now opened the kitchen door."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh! yes. I know the noise which it makes."

"Martial's dog is still howling," said Amandine, listening. Suddenly, she exclaimed: "François, our brother is calling us."

"Martial!"

"Yes—don't you hear him?"

And so it was. In spite of the thickness of the door, the powerful voice of Martial reached the ears of the children.

"Good heaven! we cannot go to him; we are locked in. They must wish to hurt him, since he calls to us."

"If I could prevent them, I would do it, if they should cut me in pieces for it."

"But our brother does not know that they have locked our door. He will think we are not willing to go to his aid. Call out to him, François, that we are locked in."

The boy was about to follow his sister's advice, when a violent blow from without, shook the blinds of the room in which the children were confined.

"They are coming through the window to kill us!" exclaimed Amandine, and, in her fright, she rushed upon the bed, and hid her face in her hands. François remained motionless, although he shared the terror of his sister.

After the blow against the window, the blind was not opened, and everything around the house was as silent as the grave. Martial had ceased calling to the children, who were somewhat comforted, but still excited by strong anxiety. François ventured to raise the window slightly, and peep out of doors.

"Take care, my brother," said Amandine, in a low tone, hearing François open the window. "Can you see anything?" said she, seated upon her bed.

"No; the night is too dark."

"Don't you hear anything?"

"No; the wind blows too hard."

"Come away, come away then."

"I see something now."

"What is it?"

"The light of a lantern, moving to and fro."

"Who carries it?"

"I see nothing but the light—it is coming this way—I hear voices."

"Who speaks?"

"Hark! hark!—'tis Calebasse."

"What does she say?"

"She says: 'Hold on tight to the ladder.'"

"There: you see that, in taking down the long ladder which was against our window, they made that noise."

"I hear nothing more."

"And what are they doing with the ladder?"

"I cannot see."

"Don't you hear anything more?"

"No."

"Oh, dear! brother; I fear they have taken the ladder to climb into brother Martial's room."

"It may be."

"If you would only open the blind a little, and see."

"I dare not."

"Only a very little."

"Oh! no, no! What if mother should perceive it?"

"It is so dark, that there can be no danger."

François, with great reluctance, followed the advice of his sister, and opened the blind slightly, and looked through.

"Well, what do you see, brother?" said Amandine, overcoming her timidity, and approaching her brother on tip-toe.

"By the light of the lantern, I can see Calebasse, who holds on to the ladder: they have placed it against Martial's window."

"What else?"

"Nicholas is climbing the ladder, with a hatchet in his hand—I see it shine."

"Ah! you are not in bed, and you are watching us," exclaimed suddenly the widow from below, to François and his sister. At the time she went into the kitchen, she had perceived the light, which the children had not taken the precaution to extinguish. "I am up—I am up!—and I have caught you, little spies!" said the widow, in an enraged voice.

Such were the events which took place on the Island of the Ravageur, on the night preceding the day when Madame Seraphin was to bring to it Fleur-de-Marie.

CHAPTER VIII.

FURNISHED ROOMS TO LET.

The Passage of the Brasserie, a dark and obscure street, situated in the centre of Paris, but very little known, leads from the Rue Traversière Saint-Honoré to the Cour Saint-Guillaume. About the middle of this damp and gloomy passage, into which the sun seldom penetrates, arose a house with furnished rooms to let, vulgarly called *garni*, on account of the low price at which they were rented. Upon an old sign could be read, "Furnished apartments and sleeping-rooms." On the right of the dark alley was the door of a shop no less obscure, which was kept by the principal tenant of the *garni*. The name of this man was Micou, a name frequently mentioned in the conversation between Nicholas and his mother. He was ostensibly a dealer in old iron, but covertly a purchaser of stolen lead, copper, pewter, or iron. To say that he was on terms of business and friendly intercourse with the Martials, is to give a sufficiently definite idea of his moral character.

There is one fact which is as startling as it is curious: we allude to a sort of affiliation and mysterious fellowship between all the Parisian malefactors. Those prisons where all the convicts associate together, are the great centres from which those waves of corruption flow, that deluge the capital with blood.

Father Micou was a corpulent man of fifty, with a countenance marked by low cunning, a red nose, and rubicund cheeks. He wore on his head a fur cap, and was wrapped up in a green overcoat. Over the small cast-iron stove, at which he warmed himself, could be seen a board with numbers upon it, under which hung the keys of the absent lodgers who had rooms in the tenement. The panes of the front windows, looking into the street, were protected by iron bars, and painted in such a manner that people from without could not observe what was going on in the shop—a precaution by no means superfluous. Darkness and obscurity seemed to hold dominion throughout the large and capacious store-room. From the damp walls hung rusty chains of all sizes and descriptions, and the floor was almost hidden by pieces of refuse iron.

Three peculiar raps upon the door now attracted the attention of the landlord of the premises—the receiver and vendor of stolen goods.

"Come in!" he exclaimed.

Nicholas, the son of the *ravageur*, entered. He was very pale; his face was even more sinister and repulsive than it was the day before; and it will be seen that, during the following conversation, he affected a noisy gaiety. It was the next day to that on which he had had the conflict with his brother, that the following conversation took place.

"Ah! it is you, good subject!" said the landlord, cordially.

"Yes, Father Micou, I have come to transact some business with you."

"Shut the door, then—shut the door."

"My dog and my cart are outside with the articles."

"What have you brought me?—lead?"

"No, Father Micou."

"It cannot be *ravage*.* You are too large now; you do not work at that trade any more. It is, perhaps, iron?"

"No, Father Micou, it is copper—four pigs of it, at least a hundred and fifty pounds: it is as much as my dog can do to draw it."

"Go and bring it: let us weigh it."

"You must help me, Father Micou, for my arm is lame." The countenance of the bandit seemed to express a feeling of hatred and satisfied vengeance, as this association called to his mind his fight with his brother.

"What is the matter with your arm, my boy?"

"Nothing but a sprain."

"You must get a red-hot iron and dip it into water, and put your arm into it while the water is almost boiling: it is the remedy of an old ironmonger, but it is excellent."

"Thank you, Father Micou."

"Well, come after the copper; I will help you, lazy fellow."

In two trips, the pigs were brought from a cart drawn by an enormous bull-dog, and taken into the shop.

"That cart of yours is a good idea," said Father Micou, arranging a wooden scale suspended from a beam in the ceiling.

"Yes: when I have anything to carry about the City, I put both dog and cart into my boat, and when I land I harness him. A hackney-coachman might tell tales, but my dog doesn't talk."

"And did you leave them all well at home?" asked the receiver, while weighing the copper. "Are your mother and sister in good health?"

"Very well, thank you."

"And the children also?"

"Yes, the children also. And your nephew, Andrew, where is he?"

"Don't mention him. He was drunk yesterday: Barbillon and the big cripple brought him home this morning; he is off now on an errand to the principal post-office, Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau. Is your brother Martial a wanderer still?"

"Upon my faith, I do not know."

"How! you do not know?"

"No," said Nicholas, assuming a look of indifference; "I have not seen him for two days. He has perhaps returned to poach in the woods; unless his boat, which was old and rotten, has sunk in the middle of the river, and himself with it."

"It wouldn't affect you much, I dare say, for you never could bear your brother."

"That's true. Everybody has his own notions. How many pounds are there?"

"Your eye is good; a hundred and forty-eight pounds, my boy."

"And you owe me ——"

"Thirty francs, exactly."

"Thirty francs! when copper is worth one franc per pound."

"I'll say thirty-five francs, and not a sous more, if you go to the devil—yourself, cart, copper, dog and all."

"But, Father Micou, you shave me a little too close; there is no reason in it."

"If you will prove to me that the copper belongs to you, I will give fifteen sous a pound for it."

"Always the same song! You are all alike—a parcel of thieves! How can you swindle your friends in such a manner? But this is not all: if I take goods in exchange, you will be more liberal perhaps."

"To be sure. What do you want? chains or hooks for your boats?"

"Neither. I want four or five sheets of iron, very stout, thick, and strong; suitable, as one might say, to line window-blinds with."

"I have just what you want, one-third of an inch thick: a pistol bullet couldn't pierce it."

"That's what I want, precisely."

"Of what size?"

"Seven or eight feet square."

"Good! What else do you want?"

"Three iron bars, four feet long and two square inches thick."

"I demolished, the other day, the bars of a window, that will fit you like a glove. What else?"

"Two strong hinges, with a latch, to open and shut a sort of small door, two feet square."

"A trap, you mean."

"No, a kind of valve.

"I can't understand what use you have for a valve."

"That's very possible; but *I* do."

Very well, you can select for yourself; I've got a heap of hinges there. What else do you want?"

"That's all. Prepare all my goods immediately, Father Micou: I will call and take them when I come back. I have some other business to do."

"With your cart, I suppose. Look here, you rogue! I saw a bundle in the bottom of it; some tit-bit, I suppose, that you took from the larder *of all the world*."

* Fragments of metal which the *ravageurs* pick up.

"Just as you say, Father Micou; but you do not eat such things. Do not make me wait for my goods, for I must return to the island by noon."

"Be easy; it's only eight o'clock. If you don't go far, you can return in an hour, and money and goods will both be ready. Will you take a drop?"

"Of course. You owe me one, I think."

Father Micou took from an old closet a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, and a cup without a handle, and the beverage was poured out.

"Your health, Father Micou."

"Your own, my boy—and that of the *ladies* of your family."

"Thank you. How prospers the *garni*?"

"Middling: I have always some lodgers upon whom I fear a descent of the police; but they pay accordingly."

"What do you mean?"

"What a fool you are! Sometimes I take in lodgers just as I buy goods: I think no more of asking a passport from them, than I should a bill of parcels from you."

"I understand: you make them pay dear, for the same reason that you force me to sell cheap."

"We must all earn our living. A cousin of mine keeps a splendidly-furnished house in the Rue Saint-Honoré; his wife is also a first-rate milliner, and employs twenty girls, either at her own house or at their rooms."

"There must be some pretty ones among them, you old rogue!"

"Certainly, there are two or three of them who are rather tempting—particularly one little one who works at her own room, and who laughs all day long: they call her Rigolette. My eyes, boy, if I was only thirty years younger!"

"Well done, old chap! Cool yourself, or I shall cry out fire."

"But she is well-behaved and honest, my boy."

"She's a simpleton, perhaps; but what did you say about your cousin?"

"He keeps a very nice house, and belongs to the same class with Rigolette."

"Honest?"

"Just so."

"What a fool!"

"He only takes in lodgers that are able to show a passport,* but if some apply who have none, he knows that I am less scrupulous, and sends them to me."

"And they pay accordingly?"

"Of course."

"But, are all thieves who have no passports?"

"By the way, my cousin sent me the other day a customer, whom it would puzzle the devil to understand. Let us take another toothful."

"With all my heart; 'tis excellent brandy. Come, here's to your very good health, Father Micou."

"Yours, my boy. I was saying, that my cousin sent me the other day a customer, whose situation I, for one, cannot comprehend. Just imagine a mother and daughter, who look as poor and rusty as if they had escaped from prison, carrying all they own in the world in a handkerchief. Well, they cannot be of any consequence, because they have no passports, and are taking lodgings from fortnight to fortnight, and have not stirred since they have been here, no more than dormice, nor has any one called to see them—no, not a soul; and yet, if they were not so pale and pinched up, they would be fine-looking women—the daughter in particular. She is no more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, pale as a white rabbit, with large wide black eyes. My stars, what eyes!"

"You will catch fire again, old sinner. What do these two women employ themselves about?"

"I tell you, that is what I don't comprehend. They must be honest, and yet they have no papers. They receive letters without any direction. Their names must be unpleasant to write."

"How is that?"

"They sent my nephew, Andrew, this morning to the post-office, to inquire for a letter that was to come from Aubiers in Normandy, directed to Madame X. Z. They wrote it upon a small scrap of paper, so that Andrew might obtain the letter by giving the information. You see, they can't be anybody, or they would not take the name of an X and a Z, instead of the name of some family."

"They never will pay the rent."

"An old monkey like me can't be taught any new grimace. You can't catch this bird with such chaff. They have a small room without any fire-place, for which I have made them pay fifteen francs in advance. They are ill, perhaps, for they have not been down stairs for two days. They cannot be ill from over-eating, for they have had no fire to cook by since they have been in my house. Nobody calls upon them, and they have no papers."

"You would do a poor business, if you always had such customers, Father Micou."

"Oh, my tenants come and go. If I lodge some people without passports, I lodge others that are well off in the world. I have, at present, two travelling clerks, a post-office carrier, the orchestra leader of the Café des Aveugles, and a woman who lives on her income, all excellent people. They alone would save the reputation of my establishment, should the police be particular in their inquiries. They are not night tenants; they come out in broad sunshine."

"Whenever any sunshine gets down into this alley, you mean, Father Micou."

"You are a funny chap. Let's take another drop."

"Very well; but it must be the last. It's time that I was off. By the way, Robin, the Gros-Boiteux, lodges here still, does he not?"

"Up-stairs, next door to the mother and daughter. He's running through his prison money fast. I don't think he has got much left."

"You had better take care of yourself: he is under sentence."

"I know it, but I cannot get clear of him. I believe he is planning some job. Little Tortillard, the son of Bras-Rouge, came after him the other evening with Barbillon. I fear that this cursed Robin will ruin all the rest of my tenants; and after his fortnight has expired, I will tell him that his room is engaged by an ambassador, or by the husband of Madame Saint-Ildefonse, the lady who lives on her income."

"What! does she live on her income?"

"To be sure. Three rooms, and a small chamber in front, with a room in the garret for her servant, all newly furnished throughout, at eighty francs a month, paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives up one of her rooms

* A penalty is inflicted upon any landlord in Paris, who receives a guest into his house who cannot produce a passport, signed by the commissary of police.

whenever he comes from the country. However, I think that his country-seat may be in the Rue Vivienne, or in the Rue Saint-Honoré, or that honest vicinity."

"I understand: she lives on an income which he furnishes to her."

"Hold your tongue, here is her servant."

A woman of advanced years, wearing an apron of dirty white, now entered the shop.

"What can I do for you, Madame Charles?" asked Father Micou.

"Is your nephew at home, Father Micou?"

"He has gone to the post-office, but will soon return."

"M. Badinot would like him to take this letter as directed. There is no answer expected, but it must be done immediately."

"In a quarter of an hour, he will take it, madame."

"He must make haste."

"Depend upon it."

The servant now disappeared.

"Is that the servant of your lodger, Father Micou?"

"No, you simpleton; it is the servant of the rich lady, Madame Saint-Ildefonse. M. Badinot is her uncle. He arrived yesterday from the country," said the landlord, examining the letter; and then he added, reading the address: "Just see what fine acquaintances they have; they are tip-top people. He writes to a viscount."

"No!"

"Look for yourself. '*Viscount de Saint-Remy, Rue de Chaillot. In great haste. For himself, personally.*' I think that, when I have rich ladies whose uncles are in correspondence with viscounts, I need not feel ashamed of having some lodgers in the fifth story, who are without passports."

"So I think. Well, I'll see you again, very soon, Father Micou. I'll fasten my dog to your door, and take my parcel on my shoulders: prepare my goods and my money, that I may be right off."

"Be easy. Four pieces of good sheet-iron, two feet square; three iron bars, three feet long; and two hinges, for a valve. The valve appears very singular to me, but never mind. Is that all?"

"Yes—and my money."

"And your money! But look here: before you go, I must tell you that I have been watching you since you came in."

"Well, what of it?"

"I do not know, but something must be the matter with you."

"With me?"

"Yes."

"You must be crazy. Nothing is the matter with me, except that I am hungry."

"Hungry? It may be; but you look as if you wished to appear gay, while there is something inside which pinches, as it were, smarts—a sort of flea on your conscience, as people say; and if *you* feel it, the bite must be pretty sharp, for your conscience is none of the tenderest."

"I tell you, Father Micou, that you are crazy," said Nicholas, shuddering, in spite of himself.

"I should also say, that you shuddered this very moment."

"The reason was, that I had a twinge of pain in my arm."

"Do not forget my remedy; it will cure you."

"Thank you, Father Micou; I will be with you again shortly:" and the bandit departed.

The receiver was engaged in concealing the pigs of copper, and getting together the various articles that Nicholas had ordered, when a new character entered the shop. He was a man of about fifty years of age, with a shrewd and cunning countenance, and thick grey whiskers, extending entirely around his face, with gold spectacles upon his nose, and genteelly dressed. The wide sleeves of his brown overcoat, with cuffs of black velvet, disclosed the straw-coloured gloves that covered his hands, while the varnish upon his boots, though evidently external, was unsoiled and brilliant. Such was M. Badinot, the uncle of Madame Saint-Ildefonse, whose distinguished social position was the pride of Father Micou. The reader will recollect that M. Badinot, who was once an attorney, but had been struck off the roll for certain malpractices, had now become a *chevalier d'industrie*—an agent in equivocal matters—and served, among his various other capacities, as agent to the diplomatist, the Baron de Graün, having furnished him with frequent and precise information concerning many characters in this narrative.

"Madame Charles has just given you a letter, I believe," said M. Badinot to the landlord, "to be conveyed as directed."

"Yes, sir: my nephew will be here in a few moments, and take charge of the letter."

"I do not wish it; I have changed my mind. Give me the letter; I will go myself and call on the Viscount de Saint-Remy," said M. Badinot, laying great stress upon the aristocratic designation.

"Here is the letter, sir. Have you any other commands?"

"No, Father Micou," said M. Badinot, in a patronising manner, "but I have some serious reproaches."

"Against me, sir?"

"Yes, very serious reproaches."

"How so, sir?"

"Does not my niece, Madame Saint-Ildefonse, pay a heavy rent for her rooms; and does she not, therefore, deserve the greatest attention? She came here with perfect confidence that she would find this a quiet house, as she is disturbed by the noise of carriages, and she expected to live here as quietly as in the country."

"And is it not as quiet here as in the country? You must know something of it, sir, as you are well accustomed to the country. It seems to me like a perfect hamlet."

"A pretty hamlet, truly! There is always an infernal noise here."

"I believe that it is impossible to find a quieter house in the City. A leader of the orchestra of the Café des Aveugles, occupies the rooms next above those of your niece; above him there is a travelling clerk, and further up, on the next floor to him ——"

"I do not allude to those persons, they are quiet and well-behaved people—my neice has no fault to find with them; but there is on the fifth floor, a large, disgusting, lame fellow, whom my niece met yesterday on the stairs, in a state of beastly intoxication: he yelled like a savage, and my niece nearly fainted with fright. Do you imagine, with such lodgers, that your house is much like a hamlet?"

"I assure you, that I am only waiting for an opportunity to turn that big, lame-legged rascal out of doors; he has paid in advance for his last fortnight's lodging, or I should have kicked him out before this time."

"You should not have received him in the first instance."

"With that one exception, I think that your niece can have no other cause of complaint. There is a post-office carrier, who is the very cream of good society; and the room next to that of the noisy cripple, is occupied by a woman and her daughter, who are as quiet as mice."

"I tell you once more, that Madame Saint-Ildefonse complains only of the big cripple: he is the perfect nightmare of this establishment, and I warn you, that if he does not leave the house every one else will."

"I will turn him out, depend upon it; I had determined to do so before you spoke to me."

"And you will do well; for if you keep him in it, your house will not stand long."

"That would not suit me at all; therefore, sir, you may look upon the big cripple as already gone, for he has only four days to remain in the house."

"That is much too long, but it is your own look-out. If the disturbance is repeated, my niece will leave the house."

"I will attend to it, sir."

"I inform you of this, sir, for your own interest. When I make up my mind, the thing is settled," said M. Badinot, in his patronising way, and left the shop.

It may be necessary for us to state, that the lady and the young girl alluded to in the last conversation, were the victims of the notary's cupidity; and we will now introduce the reader into the miserable room which they occupied.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VICTIMS OF AN ABUSE OF CONFIDENCE.

Let the reader imagine a small room on the fifth floor of the dark and gloomy house of the Passage de la Brasserie. A pale and feeble light penetrates with great difficulty into the narrow apartment, through a small window of a single frame, the dirty and cracked panes of which are patched with the same yellowish paper that covers the walls. Festoons of spiders' webs hang from the cracked ceiling, and the floor of broken brick reveals, in many places, the beams which support them. A white wood table, a chair, an old trunk without a lock, a cot with a mattress and sheets of unbleached cotton, and one brown woollen blanket, constitute the entire furniture of the apartment. On the chair is seated Madame de Fermont, on the bed reposes Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont, the names of the two victims of the avarice of Jacques Ferrand. As the bed was extremely narrow, the mother and daughter used it alternately, dividing in that manner the hours of vigil and repose. The mother was tortured by too many inquietudes, to find any relief in sleep, but they discovered in it some few moments of oblivion and repose. At this moment the daughter was asleep.

Nothing could be more touching than the picture of misery which was presented by the two females, whom the criminal cupidity of the notary had reduced to the utmost penury—females who had always been accustomed to the modest comforts which competency bestows, and to the consideration which is always yielded to an ancient and honourable name. Madame de Fermont was about thirty-six years of age, with a countenance expressive of an amiable and dignified character; with features that, though pale and careworn, revealed the traces of former loveliness. Sorrow had already sprinkled with grey, locks that were once of raven blackness, and which, parted on the brow, and smooth upon the temples, were twisted into a knot behind the head. Her dress of black was covered with large patches, and her brow was supported upon a hand, the elbow of which leaned upon the bed where her daughter was reposing, upon whose face she cast a glance beaming with all a mother's affection and agony. Claire is only sixteen, with a countenance as emaciated as that of her mother, and with her profile clearly defined against the grey cotton which covered a bolster filled with sawdust. The complexion of the fair being had lost all its bloom. Her eyes were closed in sleep, but the long dark fringes projected far on to her pallid and sunken cheek. Her lips, which were once moist and rosy, but now pale and parched, are sufficiently parted from each other, to disclose the beautiful whiteness of her teeth. The rough texture of the cloth had indented with red marks the polished purity of the arms, shoulders, and neck of the sleeping daughter of sorrow. From time to time her finely-marked eyebrows closed tight together, as if in some convulsive struggle, produced by the painful nature of her dreams. Her countenance bore already the indelible traces of a disease which threatened to undermine her constitution, and bury her misery in an early grave.

It was for a long period that the fountain of the mother's tears had been exhausted; and it was a dry, inflamed, and feverish eye which she cast upon her child. Day after day her form wasted, and her strength diminished, and she was, like her daughter, visited with all the premonitory symptoms of decay; but for fear of alarming her child, and concealing even from herself the ravages of disease, she struggled against the first attacks of her malady. Acting under the influence of similar motives, her daughter, in order to spare the heart of her mother, concealed also the extent of her sufferings. The victims of the same sorrows seemed to be the victims also of the same disease. There is a last, a final abyss in misfortune, when the most fearless and energetic characters shrink from contemplating the future as it is, close their eyes against the extent of their misery, and attempt to delude their own minds as to the true nature of the evils which beset them. To this fearful crisis Madame de Fermont and her daughter had now approached. To express the torture of that female during the long hours while she watched her sleeping child, as her mind reverted to the past, the present, and the future, would be to describe all that the deathless affection of the maternal heart is capable of suffering, from contrasting enchanting recollections with actual misery—would be to present fears the most agonising, premonitions the most frightful, regrets the most bitter; despondency as unrelieved as the gloom of the grave, wrath the most holy against the author of such accumulated calamities; the earnest appeals to human aid, and importunate prayers for Divine mercy, such as can only gush from a mother's anguish, and occasional doubts against the justice of that Almighty Being, whose ear was deaf to a cry drawn from the depths of woe, and which must pierce the heavens: "*Lord have mercy!—mercy upon my daughter!*"

"How cold she is now!" said the poor mother, touching, with her own frosty fingers, the icy brow of her child. "She is very cold, while an hour ago her face fairly burnt with heat. It

is a fever; happily, she does not know that she has it. Good heaven! how frightfully cold she is! This blanket is very thin; I would put my shawl upon the bed, but if I remove it from the door, those intoxicated men will come again to peep through the cracks, or the key-hole, as they did yesterday. What a horrible house! If I had known what a class of people inhabit it, instead of paying a fortnight in advance, I should have sought some other lodgings. When people are without passports, they are rejected by all respectable landlords. At the time I left Angers in my own carriage, not esteeming it suitable for my daughter to travel by a public conveyance, could I believe—but it is truly infamous!" said she, leaving the sentence incomplete, "that since the notary has stripped us of everything, and reduced us to the most frightful misery, I am unable to adopt any proceedings against him. Yes, had I money, I would rescue the name of my noble brother from unmerited reproaches; it should not be said, that in despair he laid violent hands upon himself, after having squandered all my property and that of my daughter. But if the reputation of my brother is a sacred trust committed to my charge, the life and future prospects of my daughter are no less sacred; but I have no proofs against him, and all proceedings would be vain. What is awful—awful!" she repeated, after a moment's pause, "is, that at that time, wretched and desperate at the terrible fate which threatened me, I dared to accuse my brother to the notary, and give reasons against him, as if my sorrows could be relieved by having two names to curse. I am grieved at my odious suspicions against the most magnanimous of brothers. Oh, that notary! He is not aware of all the terrible consequences of his theft. He only thought to steal money; but he is putting to death two females by a slow fire! Alas! I dare not tell my poor child all my fears, lest I might alarm her; but I suffer terribly myself. I have a violent fever, and only sustain myself by a wild and unnatural energy. I feel in myself the germs of a dangerous disease. Yes, I perceive its approach; my lungs and my head are visited with the severest pains, and the symptoms are more alarming than I am willing to admit. If I was to be seriously ill! If I was to die! No, no!" exclaimed the unfortunate lady, "I will not—I cannot die! To leave Claire at the age of sixteen, without resources, alone and abandoned in the midst of Paris! It can never be permitted. I am not sick, after all. What if I do feel heat at my lungs?—a heaviness in my head? It is all the result of cold, anxiety, and the want of sleep. Any one in my circumstances would experience the same feeling; but there can be nothing serious in it. Come, come; away with weakness! It is by listening to such ideas, it is by allowing myself to become despondent, that will produce actual sickness. Ought I not to busy myself in attempting to find employment for my own hands, and those of my daughter? Ought I not to present myself to the man who gave us engravings to colour?"

After a pause of a few minutes, Madame de Fermont continued, in a voice of indignation: "Oh! it was abominable! to give up that employment out of false pride in regard to Claire; to throw away that wretched means of subsistence, because I did not wish that my daughter should go alone to work during the evening at his house! Perhaps we can find sewing or embroidery elsewhere. But when one has no acquaintances, how difficult it is to find work. I have recently made several attempts in vain. In such miserable lodgings as these, we cannot expect to inspire confidence; and yet, when the small sum that still remains is exhausted, what shall we do?—what will become of us? We shall have nothing left! No—nothing on earth! Not a farthing! And yet, I was once rich—I must not indulge these thoughts. They madden me. It is these frightful forebodings that have produced my indisposition, for I am not sick. I even think I have less fever," said the unhappy mother, feeling of her own pulse.

But, alas! the rapid and irregular pulsation, which she perceived under her dry and cold skin, dispelled in an instant all illusion. After a moment's pause, during which she was a prey to the most frightful despondency, she exclaimed, with bitterness: "Just God! why are we thus tortured? What have we done, to merit such an untoward destiny? Was not my daughter the exemplar and model of innocence and purity? Was not her father the soul of honesty and honour? Have I ever forgotten a single duty of wife and mother? Why am I, and especially my poor child, foredoomed to be the victims of that reprobate? When I think, that were it not for the theft of the notary, I should have no apprehensions in regard to the future, or concerning the fate of my daughter—that our only sorrow at the present moment, as we were seated comfortably under our own rooftree, and by our own fireside, would be on account of the unhappy death of my unfortunate brother—that within two or three years, all the holy instincts of my heart would be gratified by the marriage of Claire, when I should have found a man worthy of her beauty and excellence! Who would not have been proud of her hand? It was one of my dreams to surrender to her three hundred thousand francs at least, and have only reserved for myself a pension which would have sufficed for my own support."

Reverting to the frightful contrast which this dream of maternal affection and pride presented, with the abject wretchedness to which they had been reduced by the iniquity of Jacques Ferrand, Madame de Fermont continued in a tone of delirium: "But because, in the recesses of a wicked and cruel heart, a wretch, without one redeeming virtue, willed our ruin, I must submit, resignedly, to the misery, shame, disgrace, and death of my best beloved! If the laws allow such a crime to pass unpunished, I will not allow it; for if fate drives me to it, if I can find no other relief from the abyss into which he has plunged my child, I shall take vengeance into my own hands, and slay the monster! They may do with me what they please afterwards; but all the mothers in the land will be on my side. My daughter! my daughter! Yes, to leave her alone—abandoned; that is my terror—that is the only reason why I am unwilling to die. This is the reason why I have not already slain the wretch. What would become of her? She is but sixteen, and the angels of heaven are not more pure! But her loveliness would throw temptations in her path, which it is excessively difficult for one so young to surmount; and when to these are superadded abandonment, misery, famine, who can conjecture the hazards which will beset her path? into what an abyss she might fall? It is awful! The more I learn from actual experience the

meaning of those words 'misery,' 'poverty,' the more frightful and endless appear the train of evils which attend them. To all, the sting of want is terrible; but it carries augmented venom with it, when it assails those who have been accustomed to the comforts of opulence; and I can never forgive myself for being unable, under the pressure of such wretchedness, to overcome my pride. I must see my own daughter in actual want of bread, before I can condescend to beg. What a coward I am!" continued she, with melancholy bitterness. "The notary has reduced me to beggary, and I must accustom myself to the habits of my new condition. I must forget those scruples and that delicacy which were becoming in my former situation. Now, to solicit alms for myself and daughter is a virtue; and if I cannot find employment, I must bring my mind to solicit the charity of others, since the notary has ordered it to be so. There is probably some skill, some art in my new craft, which it is my duty to improve every occasion to learn. I will learn it; it is a trade, like every other," she added, with a kind of delirious enthusiasm. "Yes, I think that I possess all that is necessary to excite sympathy; misfortunes which are horrible enough, surely, and undeserved. I have a daughter of sixteen, who is an angel. I should know how to extract compassion from that element of my woe. I will do it."

Madame de Fermont remained for a few moments absorbed in these thoughts, and then continued with more calmness: "I have several times thought of soliciting employment; the good fortune of the servant to that woman who occupies the second floor is what excites my envy the most. If I had her place, perhaps with the wages which it brings, I could supply the wants of Claire; perhaps through the woman's patronage, I could find some employment for my daughter; she would still be able to remain in this house, and we should not be separated. What happiness it would afford me, if I could make such an arrangement; it would be too much joy, it would be the unreal bliss of a dream. But if I assume her place, that servant must be sent away: well, what of that? had they any scruples in robbing me, should I hesitate to rob her? My daughter before everything else on earth. How shall I arrange to introduce myself to that woman, by what means shall I supplant her servant? Such a situation would be beyond my highest expectations."

Three violent knocks at the door started Madame de Fermont from her seat, and aroused her daughter from her slumber.

"What can the difficulty be, my mother?" exclaimed Claire, suddenly seating herself upon the bed; and she threw her arms round her mother's neck, who, frightened herself, looked with anxiety towards the door. "What can it be?" repeated Claire.

"I do not know, my child; calm yourself; 'twas nothing but a rap; it may be an answer from the post-office."

The worm-eaten door now shook from the effects of violent knocks, which some one gave with the fist.

"Who is there?" exclaimed Madame de Fermont, in a trembling voice.

A rough, hoarse voice responded: "You must be deaf, neighbour; hallo!"

"What do you wish, sir? I do not know you," said Madame de Fermont, attempting to disguise the agitation of her voice.

"I am Robin, your next-door neighbour; give me some fire to light my pipe; hurrah, be quick!"

"Good heaven! it is the cripple, who is always intoxicated," whispered the mother to her daughter.

"Look here, will you give me some fire?" bawled out the man from the outside; "if you don't, I'll break down your old door, by thunder!"

"I have no fire, sir."

"You must have some lucifer matches, every one has them; come, open your door."

"Retire from the door, sir."

"Will you open or not? once, twice."

"I beg of you to retire, or I will call for help."

"Once, twice, three times, will you or not? Then go it!" and the wretch gave such a violent blow, that the door flew open, the miserable lock having parted from it.

The two females uttered a cry of terror Madame de Fermont, notwithstanding her weakness, rushed to meet the bandit ere he could place his foot in the room, and opposed his entrance.

"Sir, this is abominable! You shall not come in!" exclaimed the unhappy mother, holding with all her strength the half-open door; "I will call for help."

"What for? what for? Should not neighbours be obliging to each other? Why didn't you open the door? I should not have broken it open;" and then, with all the obstinacy of intoxication, tottering on his unsteady legs, said: "I will go in, I will go in; I won't go away, until I have lighted my pipe."

"I have neither fire nor matches: in the name of heaven, sir, retire!"

"That is not true; you say so, that I may not see the little girl who is a-bed. Yesterday you stopped the holes in your door; she is pretty, and I want to see her. Take care of yourself, I'll smack your face if you don't let me come in; I must see the little girl, and light my pipe, or else I will tear down everything, and you too."

"Help, help!" shrieked Madame de Fermont, as she felt the door giving way before a violent shove from the lame man's shoulder.

Intimidated by the cry, the man moved back a step, shook his fist at Madame de Fermont, saying to her: "I will pay you for this, depend upon it; I will come back to-night: I will take hold of your tongue, and you shall cry for help in earnest;" and the Gros-Boiteux, as he was called at the island of the Ravageur, went down stairs, uttering horrible oaths.

Madame de Fermont, fearing his return, and perceiving that the lock was broken, dragged the table against the door, in order to barricade it. Claire was so much overcome by the scene, that she fell back senseless upon her couch, attacked by a nervous fit. Madame de Fermont, forgetting her own fear, ran to the aid of her daughter, raised her in her arms, made her drink some water, and by dint of caresses, succeeded in calming her; and as her senses gradually recovered, she said to her: "Be calm, be comforted, my child, the wicked man has gone away;" and added, with a tone of indescribable grief and emotion: "Yes, it is the notary who is the first cause of all our sorrows, of all our torture!"

Claire looked around her with a gaze of surprise and terror.

"Be quiet, my child," exclaimed Madame de Fermont, embracing her daughter; "the miserable wretch has gone."

"But what if he was to come back? You cried for help, and no one came! Dear mother, let us leave this house: I shall die from fear."

"How you tremble! you have a fever."

"No, no," said the young girl, in order to soothe her mother, "it is nothing; it is only fear; it will soon be over. And how do you feel? Give me your hand. Good heaven! how it burns! It is yourself who suffers, and you wish to conceal it from me."

"Do not believe that. I feel better than ever; it is the emotion which that man has produced, that effects me thus. I was asleep upon the chair, and woke up at the moment that you did."

"And yet, my dear mother, your eyes are very much inflamed."

"Of course: sleep upon the chair is not very refreshing, you know."

"Are you not unwell?"

"No, I assure you. How do you feel?"

"I am only slightly agitated. I entreat of you, mother, to leave this house."

"And where shall we go? You know how much difficulty we had in finding this miserable chamber, for unfortunately, we have no passport; and I have, besides, paid for fifteen days in advance. They would not return the money to us, and we have so small a sum left, that we must hoard it as much as possible."

"Perhaps the Count de Saint-Remy will give you an answer one of these days."

"I have now no hope; it is so long since I have written to him."

"Perhaps he never has received your letter. Why do you not write to him again? It is not very far to Angers; and we should receive his answer very soon."

"You know, my dear child, how painful it was for me to do it."

"What harm will it do? He is so kind, with all his roughness. He was also one of the oldest friends of my father, and our relation."

"But he is poor himself; his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not answer, to spare himself the grief of refusing us."

"But perhaps he never has received your letter."

"But if he has received it, one of the two conclusions is inevitable: he is either too poor to aid us, or he no longer feels an interest in our welfare. Then why should we expose ourselves to the humiliation of a second refusal?"

"We have one hope yet. Perhaps they will bring us some favourable answer this morning."

"From the Count d'Orbigny?"

"The letter which you wrote to him was so simple, so touching; it explained in such moving language, our misfortunes, that he must have compassion on us. Indeed, something informs me that we should place confidence in him."

"He has no little reason to take an interest in us: he was acquainted with your father formerly; and I have frequently heard my poor brother speak of him, as a man with whom he was intimately acquainted before he left Paris to reside in the country with his young wife."

"That is what causes me to hope. He has a young wife, whose sympathy can but be enlisted for us; and then one is able to accomplish so much good in the country. He might employ you as his housekeeper; and I could superintend the clothes. The Count d'Orbigny is so rich, and his establishment is so large, that there must always be a large demand for services."

"Yes; but we have such a small claim upon his interest."

"We are miserable."

"That is a sure title in the eyes of the charitable."

"Let us hope that the Count d'Orbigny and his wife are so."

"In case we cannot find relief from him, I will overcome my scruples, and write to the Duchess de Lucenay."

"The lady of whom the Count de Saint-Remy spoke to us, and whose generosity and kindness of disposition he so often extolled?"

"Yes; the daughter of the Prince de Noirmont. The count was acquainted with her when she was quite young, and treated her almost as if she had been his own child. The duchess must have numerous acquaintances; she might procure some situation for us."

"That is true, mother; but I fully appreciate the cause of your reserve towards her. But with the Count d'Orbigny, my father and uncle were personally acquainted."

"In case the duchess will do nothing for us, I have one last resource."

"What is that, mother?"

"It is a feeble, and perhaps a very rash hope. But why should I not try it? The son of the Count de Saint-Remy is ——"

"Has the count a son?" exclaimed Claire, interrupting her mother, with astonishment.

"Yes, my child, he has a son."

"But he never mentioned him; he never came to Angers."

"It is true, and for reasons that you cannot know. The count having left Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since that time."

"Fifteen years, without seeing his father!"

"Alas! it is so. I should tell you that the son of the count is very rich, and is very much courted and admired in the best society."

"Very rich? But his father is poor."

"All the fortune of the son came from his mother."

"But what if it did? How can he desert his father?"

"His father would accept nothing from him."

"Why so?"

"That is another question which I cannot answer. But I heard my brother say, that all the world extolled the generosity of the young man. He must, therefore, be kindly disposed towards us. And when I inform him that my husband was the intimate friend of his father, perhaps he will condescend to take an interest in us. He has so many friends and acquaintances, that it will not be difficult for him to procure us employment."

"And we might ascertain, through him, whether the Count de Saint-Remy had not left Angers before you wrote to him, which will be a satisfactory explanation of his silence."

"I believe, that the son and father have no correspondence together; but there will be no harm in making application."

"Unless the Count d'Orbigny should give a favourable reply; and I confess that I have great confidence."

"Several days have already elapsed since I wrote to him, explaining our misfortunes; and yet, thus far, I have received no response, although a letter posted by four o'clock in the afternoon, reaches Aubiers the next morning. A reply has been due for five days."

"Perhaps, before replying, he is deliber-

ting in what manner he can be most useful to us."

"May God listen to you, my child!"

"It seems to me very possible, mother; for if he had determined not to aid us, he would have written immediately."

"He may be unwilling to aid us."

"Can that be possible, mother—to refuse to write, and thus encourage us to hope for four days—for eight days? for when people are wretched, they are apt to be sanguine."

"Alas! my child, the evils with which people are unacquainted, make but little impression upon their hearts."

"But your letter?"

"My letter can give but a very imperfect idea of our anxiety, our sufferings, our humiliation of every kind; neither can it explain to him our abject destitution of any means of existence, the horrible house in which we live, the frightful evils to which we are exposed, the lamentable prospect which threatens. But I will speak no more of it. You tremble, my child; you have been seized with a chill."

"No, mother; take no notice of it. But tell me, suppose we should be in want of everything—that the small sum in that trunk should be all spent—is it possible, that in a city so wealthy as Paris, we should both of us be allowed to perish from famine and misery, because a wicked man has robbed you of your fortune?"

"Speak no more of it, my unfortunate child."

"But tell me, if it can be possible?"

"Alas!"

"But why does God, who is omniscient and omnipotent, abandon us, who have never offended him?"

"Do not indulge such thoughts, I beg of you, my child. I prefer to see you indulge groundless hopes, than to see you surrender yourself to such afflicting doubts. Come, comfort me with some of your innocent delusions: you know that I am too apt to yield to despair."

"Yes, yes; it is much better to hope. The nephew of the porter will soon return with a letter from the post-office. Another errand will have to be paid for from our small store, and through my fault entirely; for if my health had not been so feeble, we might have gone to the post-office, as we did the day before; but you would not leave me alone, and go yourself."

"How could I, my child? What would have happened, had you been alone when the wretch broke open the door?"

"Do not mention it, my mother; the very thought of it terrifies me."

At this moment, a rough knock was heard at the door.

"Heavens! it is the cripple again," exclaimed the unfortunate mother; and, under the influence of her terror, she pushed the table still closer to the door. But her fears vanished, when she heard the voice of Father Micou.

"Madame, my nephew has just returned from the post-office, with a letter to X. Z. It comes from some distance. The postage is eight sous; including the errand, twenty sous."

"A letter from the provinces, mother! We are saved! It must be from the Count de Saint-Remy, or the Countess d'Orbigny. Poor mother! you will no longer be in solitude, in trouble no longer on my account. God is just! God is good!" said the young girl; and a ray of hope lighted up her face.

"I am much obliged to you, sir. Give me the letter—give it quickly," said Madame de Fermont, hastily removing the table and taking the note.

"It is twenty sous," said the receiver, showing the letter, which was waited for so impatiently.

"I am going to pay you."

"Oh, madame, no haste about it. I am going into the attic; I will call for pay in ten minutes, when I come back."

The landlord gave the letter to Madame de Fermont, and disappeared.

"The letter is from Normandy: it is marked Aubiers. It is from the Count d'Orbigny!" exclaimed the lady, examining the address: 'Madame X. Z., Paris.'"

"Was I not right, mother? How my heart beats!"

"Our fortune or our fate is in this letter," said Madame de Fermont, with a faltering voice, and pointing to the letter. Twice her trembling hands approached the seal to break it, but her courage failed her. How can we portray the terrible anguish of those, who, like this unhappy mother, hang in suspense upon the contents of a letter? The burning and feverish anxiety of the gamester, whose last coin is hazarded upon a card, and who, with suspended breath and inflamed eye, awaits the decisive turn upon which depends his fortune or his ruin, can give but a feeble idea of this intense anxiety, of this momentous second. The soul within instantly soars aloft into the ethereal regions of hope, or sinks into the profound abyss of despair, according to the tenour of the important missive. The mind passes through, by turns, emotions as diverse as intense—gratitude towards beneficence, or burning resentment against selfish indifference. When an appeal is made which merits compassion, those who relieve often, would relieve always; and those who always refuse, would frequently administer relief, if they were aware how the hope of succour or the fear of rebuff—their own will, in short, has the power of sending a thrill of rapture, or a pang of despair, through the soul of the unfortunate being who implores their aid.

"What a weakness!" said Madame de Fermont, with a gloomy smile, taking a seat upon her daughter's bed. "Once more, my dear Claire, I hold our fate in my hand: my mind yearns to know the contents, but I dare not break the seal! If it is a refusal, alas! I shall know it too soon."

"And should it prove to be a promise of assistance; if this small letter should contain good and consoling words, which should comfort us for the future, in promising us some humble employment in the house of the Count d'Orbigny, is not each minute we are in suspense, a minute of happiness lost?"

"Yes, my child; but if on the contrary?"

"No, mother, you are mistaken. I am sure that the letter contains welcome intelligence. When I told you that the Count d'Orbigny had so long delayed answering our letter, it was only to be able to announce that all the arrangements were completed for a favourable future. Permit me to see the letter, mother; I can discern from the inscription whether the news is good or bad. I am now sure of the welcome intelligence which it contains," said Claire, taking the letter: "this writing, plain, firm, and honest, came from a generous hand, accustomed to administer relief to those who suffer."

"I beg of you, Claire, not to express such rash hopes, or I shall still be more fearful of breaking the seal."

"Oh, my dear mother! before you open it, I can inform you of its contents. Hear me: 'Madame, your fate, and that of your daughter, is so worthy of interest, that I beg of you to come immediately to this place, if you are willing to superintend my establishment.'"

"I beg of you, once more, my child, to dismiss such idle hopes; the awakening from such a dream would be terrible," said the mother, taking the letter from her daughter's hand, and preparing herself to break the seal.

"Courage, courage!" said Claire, carried away by the sanguine feelings so natural at her age; "as for myself, I have no need of it, I am sure that the letter contains happy news. Will you not let me open the letter? Let me read it; give it to me, if you are afraid."

"Well, I prefer that you should open it; but no, no! it is better that I should do it:" and with great anxiety, Madame de Fermont broke the seal. Her daughter was deeply agitated, in spite of her apparent cheerfulness: she held her breath.

"Read aloud, mother," said she.

"The letter is not long. It is from the Countess d'Orbigny," said Madame de Fermont, looking at the signature.

"So much the better; the news which it conveys is so good, that the excellent young woman wished to write it herself."

"We shall see;" and Madame de Fermont read the following in a trembling voice: "'Madame,—The Count d'Orbigny has been so indisposed, that he was unable to reply to your letter during my absence.

"You see, mother, that I was not at fault."

"Listen, listen!"

"'I returned this morning from Paris, and I hasten to write to you, after having conferred with the Count d'Orbigny concerning your letter. He has but an imperfect recollection of the relations which you suppose existed between himself and your brother. Your husband's name, madame, is not entirely unknown to the Count d'Orbigny, but he cannot recall the circumstances under which he heard it mentioned. The pretended spoliation, of which on such feeble evidence you accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom it is our good fortune to employ as a notary, it appears to the Count d'Orbigny as a cruel calumny, the importance of which seems to be imperfectly appreciated by you. Both my husband and myself, madame, know and admire the remarkable probity of the respectable and pious man whom you so blindly attack. In short, madame, the Count d'Orbigny, sympathising, certainly, in the unpleasant situation in which you are placed, and feeling that it does not belong to him to search out the true cause, finds it impossible to afford you any assistance. Be pleased, madame, with the expression of the Count d'Orbigny's regrets, to receive the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments.

"'COUNTESS D'ORBIGNY.'"

The mother and daughter looked at each other with indescribable feelings of amazement, without being able to open their lips.

Father Micou now came to the door: "I have come, madame, for the postage and errand—twenty sous."

"Oh! it is such good news, that it is certainly worth what would suffice for our support for two days!" said Madame de Fermont, with a bitter smile, and leaving the letter upon the bed, and going to the trunk without a lock, and opening it.

"We have been robbed!" exclaimed the unfortunate woman, in affright. "There is now nothing—nothing left!" she added, in a mournful voice; and overcome with her feelings, she leaned upon the trunk.

"What do you say, mother? has the bag of money disappeared?"

Madame de Fermont, rising suddenly, went out of the room, and confronting the receiver, addressed him.

"Sir," said she, with a fiery eye, and cheeks which were flushed with indignation and affright, "I had a bag of money in that trunk; some one stole it the day before yesterday, when I was absent for an hour with my daughter; that money must be restored, do you hear? you are responsible for it."

"You have been robbed! That is not true; my house is an honest house," said the receiver, harshly. "You say that so as to escape paying the postage, and for the errand."

"I tell you, sir, that the money was all that I possessed in the world; it must be restored to me, or I will enter a complaint. I will spare nothing, I will respect nothing, and I give you due warning."

"That would be a fine course for one to adopt who has no passport; go and complain, go immediately: I defy you!"

The unhappy woman was overpowered. She could not go and leave her sick daughter, especially after the inroad and the threats of the big cripple, and the menacing language which the landlord used.

The man continued: "It is a mere pretence: you no more had a bag of silver, than you had a bag of gold; you do not wish to pay for the postage and the errand. Never mind; when you pass before my door, I will pull your old black shawl from your shoulders; it is threadbare enough, but it is worth twenty sous."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Madame de Fermont, bursting into tears, "for God's sake, have pity on us; that small sum was all that my daughter and myself had left in the world; that being stolen, there is nothing before us but death by starvation."

"How can I help it? If it be true that you have been robbed, which appears to me rather doubtful, the money has gone where we can't find it."

"Good heavens!"

"The fellow who has got it, was not fool enough to mark the coin, or to stay here to be caught, if any one in the house has stolen it—which I don't believe, because, as I was saying to the uncle of the lady on the third floor this morning, the house is a perfect hamlet. If you have been robbed, it is a misfortune you might complain of a thousand times, and never get a cent. back, and will be no better off; but," exclaimed the receiver, interrupting himself when he saw Madame de Fermont totter, "what ails you? You turn pale! Take care, mademoiselle, your mother is fainting," added he, advancing in time to support the unhappy woman, who, overwhelmed by this last blow, fainted away. The ferocious energy which had so long sustained her, yielded to this last misfortune.

"Mother! mother! what is the matter, mother?" exclaimed Claire, still in bed.

The receiver, vigorous in spite of his age, touched by a momentary feeling of compassion, took Madame de Fermont in his arms, pushed with his knee the door of the room, in order to enter, and said: "Mademoiselle, excuse me, if I enter the room while you are in bed, but I am compelled to bring in your mother, who has fainted away—it cannot last long."

Seeing the man enter, the poor child uttered a cry of terror, and concealed herself, as well as she was able, under the bed-clothes.

The landlord placed the unfortunate lady on the chair by the side of the cot, and retired, leaving the door ajar, as the lock had been broken off by the cripple.

One hour after this last shock, the violent sickness which had so long threatened Madame de Fermont, burst forth. She was the victim of a burning fever and frightful delirium, and was lying on the bed of her daughter, who was shedding tears of desperate grief—almost as sick as her mother—without any money or resources, and constantly exposed to an assault from the bandit, who occupied an adjoining apartment.

CHAPTER X.

THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will anticipate, for a few hours, the arrival of M. Badinot, who, from the Passage of the Brasserie, was going in haste to the Viscount de Saint-Remy. The nobleman, as we have already stated, lived in the Rue de Chaillot. He occupied an elegant little mansion, built between a yard and a garden, in that retired quarter, although in the immediate neighbourhood of the Champs Elysees, the most fashionable promenade in Paris.

It is useless to describe the advantages which the Viscount de Saint-Remy—a man to whom the goddess of love was very benignant—derived from a situation which was so admirably adapted to his favourite pleasures. The fair ladies who honoured him with their visits, were able to enter his mansion very privately, through a small door of his vast garden, which opened upon a deserted alley, that led from the Rue Marbœuf to the Rue de Chaillot. By a fortunate coincidence, one of the finest horticultural establishments in the capital, had also, in that same passage, an entrance which was seldom frequented; so that the mysterious visitors of the viscount had a very plausible and pastoral pretext for adventuring into this obscure alley. They were going, they could say, to select some rare flowers from the beautiful green-houses of this celebrated florist. Nor would the equivocation be entirely false, for the viscount—himself gifted with a taste for every fashionable luxury—had a delightful conservatory, which ranged along the alley to which we have alluded. A small, private door opened into this winter-garden, which was contiguous to a boudoir (we beg pardon for using the term) that was situated on the lowest floor of his mansion. We can say, without metaphor, that a female who entered the house of the viscount, by this avenue, was treading a flowery path; for the passage was lined, particularly in winter, with plants that were covered with most fragrant blossoms. The Duchess de Lucenay, who was as jealous as women of her temperament usually are, had insisted upon retaining the key of this door.

We have been thus particular in our details respecting this singular habitation, in order to convey, at least, a vague idea of one of those degraded beings, who are now happily becoming more and more rare; but to which we are bound to allude, as one of the peculiarities of this epoch—a being whom, for want of a more precise term, we shall be obliged to designate as a male courtesan. The interior of the viscount's mansion presented a singular appearance; or rather, the house was divided into two distinct parts. The lower floor, where he received his fair visitants, and the upper one, where he welcomed his cronies of the gaming-table and the turf. In the former division was a sleeping apartment, furnished with gold plate, mirrors, flowers, satin and lace—a small music-room, provided with a harp and piano, for the viscount was a capital performer upon both—a cabinet, devoted to paintings and curiosities, the boudoir which communicated with the conservatory—a drawing-room, designed to accommodate two, which was served by means of a dumb-waiter—a bath-room, furnished with all the appliances of oriental luxury and refinement, and a small library, composed chiefly of the volumes which La Mettrie had selected for Frederick the Great.

It would be superfluous to state, that all these rooms were decorated with exquisite taste, and with a sumptuousness worthy of Sardanapalus; they abounded with choice ornaments, by Watteau; rare works of Boucher; groups of Clodion in plaster, jasper, and antique marble; some precious copies of the prettiest figures of the Musée, in white marble. In addition to this, the windows opened, in the summer-time, upon the thick and verdant foliage of the garden, overloaded with the most beautiful and fragrant flowers, through which flowed a small stream of water, that fell from a rural rock, like a fold of silver-gauze, dashing its sparkling and pearly waves into a transparent basin, where two beautiful swans floated gracefully. And when cool and calm night approached, what perfume stole from these fragrant groves, which served as a canopy to sofas, made of rushes or Indian mats! In the winter, on the contrary, everything but the conservatory was closed in. Window shades of transparent silk, and curtains of lace, imparted a soft and mysterious light to the apartment; while the furniture was covered with vases, overflowing with exotic flowers. In this silent retreat, embalmed with the perfume of the rarest plants, adorned with the voluptuous creations of the pencil, you inhaled a Paphian atmosphere, and the soul and senses were bathed in a delightful langour. To add to the perfection of a temple, which was dedicated to Venus, its presiding priest was a young, elegant, and accomplished being, by turns witty and tender, gay and romantic, whom the Muses and the Graces had both adorned; fascinating in face and figure; endowed with one of those musical voices, which no female can resist; ardent, eloquent, passionate. Such was the Viscount de Saint-Remy.

In ancient Athens, he would have been admired, exalted, and deified like Alcibiades; in our days, and at the present epoch, he was a disgraced forger, a miserable swindler.

The second-floor of the viscount's mansion, had a much less effeminate appearance. It was there that he received his numerous friends, who were all connected with the best society. The furniture here, was simple and severe; its ornaments were beautiful arms, and pictures of race-horses, which had won for the viscount the nu-

merous gold and silver cups which stood upon the different pieces of furniture; the smoking-room and the gaming apartment adjoined a cheerful dining-saloon, designed for eight persons, the precise number of guests in every studied dinner. Here this select party had often eulogised the faultless excellence of the viscount's cook, and appreciated the choice wine with which his cellar was stored, before contesting with him some obstinate game of whist, upon which five or six hundred louis were staked, or before shaking the infernal dice.

Having thus exposed these two distinct divisions of the viscount's establishment, will the reader now proceed with us into the more private recesses, and have the kindness to accompany us into the yard devoted to the carriages, and ascend a small staircase, which leads to the comfortable apartment occupied by Edwards Patterson, the head groom of the viscount's stables. The illustrious driver had invited to breakfast M. Boyer, the confidential valet of the viscount. A very pretty English maid, having retired after bringing in the silver teapot, the two distinguished individuals were left alone.

Edwards was about forty years of age, and never did a driver's seat groan beneath the weight of a more imposing rotundity; never did a white periwig surmount a more rubicund visage; never was there a more perfect master of a four-in-hand. He was as excellent a judge of horses as Tattersall, of London, and as skilful a trainer as the renowned Sam Chifney. He united the rare combination of being an excellent whip, and an excellent trainer of steeds designed for the turf. When Edwards did not display his sumptuous livery of brown and silver on his box, decorated with the arms of his master, he resembled much an honest English farmer. It is under that garb that we now present him to the reader; adding, however, that under his broad red face could be distinctly observed the sharp cunning of the horse-jockey.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential valet of the viscount, was a tall, slender man, with smooth grey hair, and a bald head, with a sly, discreet, and reserved expression. He used very select language, his manners were easy and polite, slightly learned, conservative in his political opinions, and could sustain admirably his part in a quartet on the violin, by amateur performers. He took, in the most approved fashion, a pinch of snuff, from a gold box, ornamented with pearls, and with the back of his hand, as smooth as his master's, shook negligently the ruffle of his fine linen shirt.

"Do you know, my dear Edwards," said Boyer, "that your maid, Betty, cooks plain dishes in an admirable manner?"

"Upon my word, she's a good girl," said Edwards, who spoke French, fluently; "and I mean to take her with me when I remove my establishment, that is, if I determine to do it; and now that we are alone, suppose we talk of business, as you are quite a business man."

"I am so," said Boyer, indifferently, taking a pinch of snuff; "it is a trade very readily learned, when you manage the business of other people."

"I have to ask your advice upon quite an important matter, which is the reason that I invited you to come and take a cup of tea with me."

"I am at your service, my dear Edwards."

"You know, that in addition to my interest in the race-horses, I made an arrangement with the viscount, for the complete support of his stables, animals, and men; that is to say, eight horses, and five or six grooms and jockeys, at the rate of twenty-four thousand francs a year, including my own salary."

"That was reasonable."

"For four years, the viscount paid me punctually, but about the middle of the last year, he said to me; 'Edwards, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs; now what do you estimate the worth of my horses, carriages, &c.?' 'The eight horses,' said I, 'cannot be sold for less than three thousand francs each, and they are cheap at that price.' That was true, Boyer; for five hundred guineas had been paid for the carriage horses. 'It will make them,' I said, 'twenty-four thousand francs; as for the carriages, there are four, which are worth twelve thousand francs; which, added to the value of the horses, make thirty-six thousand francs.' 'Well,' said the viscount, 'buy the whole establishment of me at that price, on condition that you support, out of the twelve thousand francs which you will owe me, the horses and people, and leave them at my disposal for six months.'"

"And you wisely accepted the bargain, for 'twas a golden offer."

"Certainly: within two weeks, the six months will be up, and I shall become the proprietor of the horses and carriages."

"Nothing is more simple; the contract was drawn up by M. Badinet, the viscount's agent; what advice of me do you need?"

"What shall I do with the establishment? Shall I sell the horses and carriages, as the viscount is about to depart; and everything will sell well, for he is known all over Paris, as a crack man? or shall I establish myself as a horse-dealer, with my present stud, which would make a capital start?—in short, what do you advise?"

"I advise you to do the same thing which I shall do myself."

"What is that?"

"I find myself very much in the same situation in which you are."

"You!"

"The viscount hates details. When I entered his service, I had from my savings and my patrimony, about sixty thousand francs. I assumed the expenses of the household, as you did those of the stable, and about the same time with yourself, I found that there was about twenty thousand francs due to me, and about sixty thousand to various dealers. The viscount proposed to me, as he did to you, to sell me the furniture of the house, including plate, which is very beautiful, pictures, &c., the whole valued, at the low price, at one hundred and forty-eight thousand francs, and as there was eighty thousand due, the balance was to be used by me until it was exhausted, for the expenses of the table, the wages of the servants, &c., and for nothing else; that was the condition of the bargain."

"You realised some profit from the expenses?"

"Necessarily; for I have made arrangements with tradesmen, whom I shall not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking with gusto a pinch of snuff; "so that after the present month——"

"The furniture will be yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Assuredly, the viscount has gained by the bargain; for during the whole of the period he has been able to live like a nabob, in the very

face of his creditors; for the plate, furniture, horses, carriages, had been bought for cash, when he came of age, and were legally transferred to you and myself."

"So then, the viscount will be ruined?"

"In five years."

"And how much did he inherit?"

"A beggarly little million, in cash," said Boyer, indifferently, taking a pinch of snuff; "add to it, say, about two hundred thousand in debts: 'twas quite passable. It was then, my dear Edwards, my intention to rent the house, elegantly furnished as it is, to some English people—linen, crockery, plate, conservatory, and all. Some of your countrymen would pay a good price for it."

"Undoubtedly; and why do you not do it?"

"I would, but what is not actually money, always runs some chances; therefore, I have made up my mind to sell the furniture. The viscount is so well known as a connoisseur in furniture, and objects of art, that whatever comes from his house will bring a double price, and in that manner I shall pocket a round sum. Follow my example, Edwards; realize, realize, and do not adventure your earnings in any speculation. You are first coachman to the Viscount de Saint-Remy, and all will be emulous of securing your services. I heard yesterday of a young sprig, just of age, the cousin of the Duchess de Lucenay, the young Duke de Montbrison. He has just arrived from Italy, with his tutor, and is about to set up his establishment. His income from real estate, is two hundred and fifty thousand francs annually, and he is just entering life, only twenty years of age, full of confidence, with extravagant tendencies, and prodigal as a prince. I am acquainted with his steward, who told me all this in confidence; he has almost promised the situation of first valet, for he patronizes me, the simpleton!" and M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders, taking a good pinch of snuff.

"You expect to supplant him?"

"To be sure. He is but little better than a fool, and is also an impertinent puppy. He takes me into the establishment as if he had nothing to fear from me: within two months, I shall be in his shoes."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand francs from real estate! That must be a capital house."

"I tell you there is something to be made out of it. I will speak of you to my patron," said M. Boyer, ironically. "Accept a place there; it is a fortune with long roots, and to which one can stick for a long time. It is not a beggarly million, like the viscount's—a mere snowball. One ray of the Parisian sun melted it all away. I foresaw that I should only be here as a bird of passage. It is a pity; the style of this house was an honour to us, and until the last moment, I shall serve the viscount with the respect and esteem which is his due."

"Truly, my dear Boyer, I am much obliged to you; I accept your proposition. I will propose to the young duke the stable of the viscount; it is all ready for his hands, and is known and admired throughout Paris."

"Certainly, certainly: you can make a fine thing out of him."

"But why don't you propose to him this establishment, which is so elegantly provided with everything? What can he find that is better?"

"Certainly, Edwards, you are a smart man. I am not surprised at it; you have given me an excellent idea. We must speak to the viscount; he is a kind master; he will not refuse to speak favourably of us to the young duke. He can inform him that, as he is about to leave for the Gerolstein embassy, to which he is attached, he wishes to dispose of his whole establishment. Let us see: one hundred and sixty thousand francs for the house, all furnished, plate and fixtures; fifty thousand francs for the horses and carriages; that makes from two hundred and thirty to two hundred and forty thousand francs. It is an excellent affair for a young man, who wishes to set up a complete establishment. He would have to spend three times that sum before collecting so elegant and select a combination as we present: for we must confess, Edwards, that no one knows how to live like the viscount."

"No such judge of horseflesh."

"Nor any one who knows so well what a good table is. Godefroi, his cook, leaves this house a hundred times better artist than when he entered it: the viscount has given him excellent advice, and refined his taste exceedingly."

"And they say, in the bargain, that the viscount is a first-rate gamester."

"Excellent! winning large sums with more indifference than he loses; and yet, I never saw a man lose with greater coolness."

"As for women, Boyer, women, you might tell some tough stories; you, who are the only one admitted to the lower floor."

"I have my secrets, as you have yours, Patterson."

"Mine?"

"When the viscount ran his horses at the races, there were some confidential matters between you. I do not wish to attack the probity of your adversary's jockeys; but yet, there were some reports ——"

"Silence! my dear Boyer. A gentleman no more compromises the integrity of an antagonist's jockey, who had the weakness to listen to him ——"

"Than a gallant man compromises the reputation of a female, who has been kind to him. So I say, let us keep our secrets, or rather the secrets of the viscount, my dear Edwards."

"Well, what will he do now?"

"Start for Germany, with a good travelling carriage, and seven or eight thousand francs, which he will procure somewhere. I am in no trouble about the viscount: he belongs to that class of people who always come down on their feet."

"And he has no legacy to expect?"

"None, for his father is only just comfortable."

"His father?"

"Certainly."

"What! is not the father of the viscount dead?"

"He was not dead five or six months ago. The viscount wrote to him for certain family papers."

"But he never has been seen here."

"For a good reason; it is about fifteen years since he removed to Angers, in the provinces."

"But the viscount never visits him."

"His father, you mean?"

"Yes."

"No; never—never."

"Have they quarrelled?"

"What I am about to tell you is no secret; I had it from the confidential agent of the Prince de Noirmont."

"The father of the Duchess de Lucenay?" said Edwards, with a significant wink, which

M. Boyer, faithful to his confidential situation, and to his habitual reserve, did not choose to understand. He therefore said, indifferently: "The Duchess de Lucenay is indeed the daughter of the Prince de Noirmont. The father of the viscount was very intimate with the prince. The duchess was then a very young lady, and the Count de Saint-Remy, who was very much attached to her, treated her as affectionately as if she had been his own daughter. I had these details from Simon, the confidential servant of the prince. I can speak without any scruple, for the affair to which I allude was at that time the talk of all Paris. In spite of his sixty years, the father of the viscount is a man of an iron will, brave as a lion, and of very remarkable probity. He was a man of very small means, and married out of love the mother of the viscount, a young woman who was rather rich, inasmuch as she possessed the million which we have had the honour of seeing melt;" and M. Boyer made an inclination of his head. Edwards returned the salutation.

"The marriage was very happy, it is said, until the father of the viscount accidentally discovered some troublesome letters, which indicated that, during one of his absences, three or four years after his marriage, his wife had indulged a tender weakness towards a certain Polish count."

"That is very frequently the fortune of those Poles. When I was with the Marquis de Senneval, the marquise, a passionate woman ——"

M. Boyer interrupted his companion: "You should know, my dear Edwards, the alliances of our high families before you speak incautiously; otherwise, you will get yourself into many scrapes."

"How so?"

"The Marquise de Senneval is sister of the Duke de Montbrison, into whose service you desire to enter."

"The devil she is!"

"Just think, if you had spoken in this manner of her before envious or talkative people, you would not have remained twenty-four hours in the house."

"That is true, my dear Boyer. I will endeavour to make myself familiar with alliances."

"I will proceed. The father of the viscount perceived, after fourteen or fifteen years of a happy wedded life, that he had some reasons to complain of a Polish count. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the viscount was born some nine months after the return of his father from this fatal journey, so that he was never perfectly sure of the legitimacy of our master. At all events, the Count de Saint-Remy separated from his wife immediately after this discovery, and never would receive one sous of the property which she brought him. He retired into the provinces, with about eighty thousand francs, which he possessed. But you will see the obstinacy of the old man's diabolical temper. Although fifteen years had elapsed since the supposed insult, and one might conclude that it was outlawed, the father of the viscount, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relatives, pursued the Polish swain, and finally caught him at Venice, after having hunted for him in every city of Europe for eighteen months."

"What an obstinate old fellow!"

"He cherishes a grudge like the devil. I tell you, my dear Edwards, at Venice a terrible duel took place, in which the Pole was killed. Everything proceeded honourably, but the father of the viscount evinced such joy at seeing his antagonist mortally wounded, that his friend was obliged to drag him from the place of encounter. He wished, it is said, to see his enemy expire. The count came to Paris, visited his wife, and informed her that he had killed the Pole, and departed. After that time, he never would see his son, and retired to Angers. He lives there, it is said, like a real hermit. The eighty thousand francs were somewhat broken in upon by his pursuit of the Pole. At Angers, he associates with no one, unless it is the wife and daughter of his relative, M. de Fermont, who died a few years ago. The family seems to be an unfortunate one, for the brother of M. de Fermont blew out his brains several months ago."

"And what became of the mother of the viscount?"

"She died a long time since. That is the reason why the viscount, when he became of age, took possession of his mother's fortune, so that, you see, the viscount has small hopes of any patrimony from his father."

"Who probably hates him."

"He never wished to see him since the discovery just mentioned, fearing, I presume, that he was the son of the Pole."

The conversation was now interrupted by the appearance of a gigantic foot-boy, who, although it was scarcely eleven, was carefully powdered.

"M. Boyer, the viscount has returned," said the giant.

M. Boyer appeared much disconcerted, probably for having neglected some of his duties. He arose as hastily as if he had not been the actual proprietor of his master's establishment.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNT DE SAINT-REMY.

About two hours after Boyer had left Edwards to attend upon his master, the father of the viscount knocked at the front gate of the house in the Rue Chaillot. The Count de Saint-Remy was a man of tall stature, alert and vigorous in spite of his years, and with a complexion of almost a copper hue, which was in strong contrast with the extreme whiteness of his beard and hair. His thick eyebrows still retained their original black, and partly covered his piercing eyes, which were deeply sunk in their sockets. Although, in the spirit of misanthropy, he wore the most unostentatious apparel, there was an air of pride and dignity in his carriage which insured respect. The gate of his son's house being open, he entered it. A porter in full livery of brown and silver, perfectly powdered, and with legs enveloped in silk stockings, showed himself at the threshold of an elegant lodge, which bore about as much resemblance to the smoked den of M. Pipelet, as the room of a woman who repairs old clothes to the elegant shop of a fashionable milliner.

"The Viscount de Saint-Remy?" said the count, in a short tone.

The porter, instead of answering, directed a gaze of high-bred and contemptuous surprise to the white beard, threadbare frock coat, and old hat of the unknown, who held in his hand a heavy cane.

"Viscount de Saint-Remy?" said the count, in a still more emphatic tone, astonished at the impertinent gaze of the menial.

"The viscount is not in."

[Gros-Boiteux forcing the door of the chamber of Madame de Fermont.]

"I will wait for him," said the count, and he passed in.

"Here, my friend—this is not the way to enter a house!" exclaimed the porter, pursuing the count, and taking hold of his arm.

"How, rogue!" replied the old gentleman, raising his cane in a threatening manner; "do you dare to place your hand upon me?"

"I will dare do something else, if you do not depart instantly. I told you that the viscount was not in, and you must go."

At this moment Boyer, attracted by the voices, made his appearance on the portico of the house, and asked: "What is the noise?"

"M. Boyer, this old gentleman insists upon going in, although I told him that the viscount was not at home."

"We will finish this," said the count, speaking to Boyer. "I wish to see my son. If he has gone out, I will wait for him."

"If my lord the count will follow me, I am at his service."

"Proceed," said the count, who followed Boyer, to the great amazement of the porter. Attended by the valet, the father arrived on the second floor; his guide, conducting him through the cabinet of Florestan (by which name we shall hereafter call the viscount, to distinguish him from his father), introduced him into a small saloon, adjoining the cabinet, and immediately over the boudoir on the first floor.

"The viscount was obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer. "If my lord the count will be so kind as to wait, I presume that he will soon be at home;" and the valet disappeared.

Left to himself, the count gazed around with an eye of great indifference; but, upon a sudden, he started in surprise, while his face became animated, his cheeks flushed, and his brow contracted with anger. His eye had fallen on the

the portrait of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint-Remy. He folded his arms upon his breast, cast his eyes upon the floor, as if to escape from a disagreeable vision, and walked with hurried strides through the room.

"It is strange," said he; "that woman is dead; I have slain her lover, and my wound is as sharp and painful as on the first day of that terrible discovery. My thirst for vengeance is not yet extinguished; my wild misanthropy in forsaking society altogether, has left me face to face with the memory of that outrage. The death of her partner in guilt avenged my dishonour, but could not efface it from my recollection. What makes my hatred incurable, is the thought that, during fifteen years, I was her dupe; that, during fifteen years, I lavished tenderness, affection, and esteem, upon the wretch who had so infamously deceived me; that I loved her son, the son of her crime, as if he had been my own—for the aversion with which Florestan now inspires me, proves clearly that he is no child of mine. And yet, there can be no demonstration of his illegitimacy, and the doubt is frightful to me. If he were my son, the neglect with which I have treated him—the aversion I have always manifested towards him—my constant refusal to see him, would be unpardonable. After all, he is rich, young, and happy. Of what use could I have been to him? But his affection might have softened the sorrows of which his mother was the cause."

After a moment's pause, the count continued, shrugging his shoulders: "Again I am indulging these foolish speculations, which can never have any other result than to revive all my pangs. Let me be a man, and stifle these emotions which I feel at the prospect of seeing him who, for ten years of my life, I loved with so much idolatry, whom I loved as my son; he, whom I fear is the son of the man whose blood, with so much joy, I saw following my sword, and whose dying agonies I was prevented from seeing. Oh! they knew not what it was to be afflicted as I have been. And the thought that my name, always respected and honoured, should have become a by-word and derision; to think that my name belongs to the son of a man whose heart I could have torn out with pleasure! I do not know how my reason maintained its ascendancy in the presence of such thoughts."

The Count de Saint-Remy, continuing to walk with great agitation, unwittingly raised the curtain which divided the cabinet from the saloon, and proceeded a few steps in the former apartment. He had disappeared for a moment, when a small door, concealed beneath the drapery, was slowly opened, and the Duchess de Lucenay, enveloped in a large shawl of green cashmere, and wearing on her head a plain black velvet bonnet, entered the saloon which the count had just left. The day before, Florestan had appointed an interview with the duchess for this morning, and she having a key, as we have said, to the private entrance, had, as usual, passed through the greenhouse, with the expectation of finding Florestan in the apartments on the first floor; but not meeting him there, she concluded that he, as he had frequently done before, had lingered in his cabinet, to complete some writing upon which he was engaged. A private staircase having been opened between the boudoir and the study, the duchess ascended with perfect confidence, supposing, as usual, that Florestan had given orders to the porter to admit no one. She was about to enter the study, when the curtains were divided, and the duchess found herself face to face with the Count de Saint-Remy — the father of Florestan. She could scarcely restrain a cry of fear.

"Clotilde!" exclaimed the count, stupefied with surprise.

An intimate acquaintance with the Prince de Normont, the father of the duchess, the count had been in the habit of calling her by that familiar name when she was a child. The duchess remained immoveable, contemplating with surprise the old gentleman with white beard, whose features she recalled with difficulty.

"You, Clotilde!" repeated the count, with a painful accent of reproach. "You here, in my son's house?"

The last words fixed her fleeting recollection; the duchess recognised, at once, the father of Florestan, and exclaimed: "Count de Saint-Remy!"

The position in which she was placed was so palpable and significant, that the duchess, with whose resolute and eccentric character the reader is already acquainted, disdained any resort to falsehood to explain the singularity of her appearance in Florestan's house; and, confiding in the parental fondness which the count had formerly displayed, she extended to him her hand, and with a tone at once graceful, cordial, and bold, which was exclusively her own, said: "Come, come, you are my oldest friend; remember that, twenty years ago, you called me your dearest Clotilde."

"Yes, I called you so, but ——"

"I know already everything that you are going to say; you know my motto—what is, cannot be prevented; what shall be, will be."

"Ah! Clotilde ——"

"Spare your reproaches—let me rather speak of my delight in seeing you again; your presence recalls a thousand things to my recollection: my dear father, in the first place, and my fifteenth year, in the second—what a delightful age!"

"It is because your father was my friend."

"Oh! yes," replied the duchess, interrupting the count; "he was warmly attached to you. Do you remember that I used to call you, in a laughing manner, 'the man with the green ribbons?' You used to tell him: 'You will spoil Clotilde;' but he would reply, kissing me: 'I believe that I shall spoil her, but I must be quick about it, for society will soon tear her from me, and spoil her in its turn.' Excellent father! what a friend I lost in you." A tear glistened in the beautiful eye of the duchess, and putting forth her hand to the count, she said: "I am truly happy, very happy to see you, for you awaken recollections which are most pleasant, and grateful to my soul."

Although the count was well acquainted with the somewhat eccentric character and well established resolution of the duchess, he was very much surprised at the delicacy and grace with which she entertained him, in the somewhat equivocal position in which he had discovered her.

"If you have been in Paris for a long time, it was very wrong in you," continued the duchess, "not to come and see me before: we could have talked so much about the past—for do you know that I have arrived at that age when old friends have a great charm for me."

The duchess could not have been more at her ease, if she had been receiving a morning call at the Hotel de Lucenay.

"Instead of speaking of the past," replied her companion, "would it not be more suitable to speak of the present; my son may return at any moment, and ——"

"No," said Clotilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the small door which leads to the conservatory, and his arrival is always announced by a bell which he rings when he comes through the porter's gate; and at that signal I shall disappear as mysteriously as I came, and I will not disturb your first interview with him by my presence. What a delightful surprise you will afford him! You have forsaken him for so long a time, that I am the one who ought to reproach you."

"What! *you* reproach *me*?"

"Certainly: what guide, what counsellor has Florestan had in starting in the world? Upon a thousand subjects, the advice of a father is indispensable; so that, frankly speaking, it was wrong for you to ——" The duchess could not restrain a burst of laughter at the manner in which she had changed the tables, and she said to the count: "You must admit that there is a great deal of novelty in our respective positions, and that it is quite piquant to improve this opportunity to lecture you."

"I confess it is somewhat peculiar, but I neither deserve your censure nor your praise. I have called to see my son, but not for my son's sake—at his age, he can no longer need advice."

"What do you mean?"

"You must be acquainted with my reasons for detesting Paris," said the count, with a painful and constrained expression. "Nothing but circumstances of the greatest interest could have drawn me from Angers, especially to this place, and to this house; but I have been compelled to conquer my repugnance, and resort to every individual who might assist in researches in which my heart is greatly interested."

"In that case," said the Duchess de Lucenay, with great eagerness, "I beg of you to command my services, if I can be of any use whatever. Have you anything to solicit of the government? The duke must have some influence, for the days when I dine with my great-aunt De Montbrison, he gives a dinner to the deputies. He does not put himself to that inconvenience without some good motive; he wishes to gain some ascendancy over people who have great influence in these times. If I can serve you in any manner, consider me as under your orders. There is also my cousin, the Duke de Montbrison, who is intimate with all the young peers. Can he do anything for you? In that case, I offer you his services also; in one word, you can dispose of me and of everybody that I can command."

"I know it, and I do not refuse your assistance, although, however ——"

"Come, my dear Alceste, we are people of the world, and let us act accordingly. Whether we are here or elsewhere, it matters but little, I suppose, to the affair which interests you, and which is now of equal interest to me; and I insist upon talking about it in all sincerity." With these words, the duchess went near to the fire-place, and advanced towards it the prettiest foot in the world, which, at that moment, was very cold.

With perfect tact, the duchess avoided any further allusion to the viscount, and confined the conversation to a topic to which the count seemed to attach great importance. The conduct of Clotilde would have been different in the presence of the mother of Florestan; she would have acknowledged to her, with pride and happiness, how dear her son was to her. Notwithstanding the rigour and severity of the Count de Saint-Remy's character, he was completely overcome by the ease and the grace of the woman whom he had loved so tenderly in her childhood, and he almost forgot the equivocal position which she now occupied. In what manner, moreover, could he resist the contagion of example, when she, who should have been most embarrassed with an interview under such circumstances, was more at her ease than the count himself?

"Perhaps, Clotilde," he said, "you were not aware, that for a long time, I have lived at Angers?"

"Yes, I knew it."

"I was desirous of retirement, yet I selected that city as my residence, because M. de Fermont, who, at the time I was so grievously afflicted, behaved towards me as a brother, lived there. After having accompanied me to nearly all the cities of Europe, in pursuit of a man whom I desired to slay, he acted as my second in a duel."

"Yes, a terrible duel; my father told me of it formerly," said the duchess, with sadness; "but fortunately, Florestan knows nothing of the duel, nor the cause of it."

"I wished to have him respect his mother and her memory," said the count, smothering a sigh. "A few years after," continued the father, "M. de Fermont expired at Angers, in my arms, leaving a daughter and a wife, who, in spite of my misanthropy, I was compelled to love, because no character in the world could be purer, nobler, or more exalted, than those of these excellent females. I lived alone, in a distant part of the city, but when I had emerged from my first sorrow at this great affliction, I went to see Madame de Fermont, to speak to her and her daughter of him, whom they had so devotedly loved, as, during his life, I resorted to that society, in which I had concentred all my affections, for consolation. The brother of Madame de Fermont resided in Paris, and superintended all her business affairs, and after the death of her husband, he deposited with a notary, about three hundred thousand francs, which embraced the entire fortune of the widow. After a short time, a new and terrible misfortune befel Madame de Fermont; her brother, M. de Renneville, committed suicide about eight months since. I gave her every consolation in my power to administer, and after her mind was partially restored to tranquillity, she left for Paris, in order to arrange her business affairs. After a short period, I learned that, by her orders, her furniture at Angers had been sold, and that the proceeds had been appropriated to the payment of some debts left by M. de Fermont. Alarmed at the circumstance, I sought for some explanation, and learned vaguely, that Madame de Fermont and her daughter were in the greatest distress, the victims, probably, of some bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could rely upon any one in such an extremity, it was me, and yet I received no letters from her. When I had lost this delightful intimacy, I fully appreciated its value. You can scarcely imagine the anxiety which I have suffered since the departure of Madame de Fermont and her daughter; the husband and the father had been to me as a brother. I determined to find them again, and I could not divine why, in their distress, they had not applied to

me, poor as I am. I departed for Paris, leaving at Angers an individual who would inform me if he heard anything more concerning them."

"Proceed."

"Even yesterday, I received a letter from Angers, which informed me that no additional information had been received concerning them. Upon my first arrival at Paris, I commenced my researches; I made inquiries at the last residence of M. de Renneville, and learned that his sister and niece resided on the Quay Saint-Martin."

"And what did you learn at this house?"

"That they had once resided there, but had now left, and the people could not inform me whither they had gone. Thus far, my researches have been in vain. After a thousand disappointments, before yielding entirely to despair, I had resolved to come here, thinking that, for some incomprehensible reason, Madame de Fermont might not have applied to me, but resorted to the son of her husband's best friend. My last hope was a very feeble one; but I was determined to neglect no possible resource to find the unfortunate mother and daughter."

For several moments, the duchess had listened to the count with redoubled attention, and suddenly exclaimed: "Indeed! it would be very singular, but it may be that your inquiries concern the same persons in whom the Marquise d'Harville is interested."

"What persons are they?" asked the count.

"The widow of whom you speak, is still young, with a countenance that is noble?"

"Certainly; but what do you know of her?"

"Her daughter is as beautiful as an angel, and about sixteen years of age."

"Yes, yes!"

"And her name is Claire?"

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, tell me were they are!"

"Alas! I do not know."

"You do not know?"

"I will tell you what has given me this information. A lady of my acquaintance, the Marquise d'Harville, came to ask me if I was not acquainted with a widow lady, whose daughter was called Claire, and whose brother had committed suicide. She had applied to me, because she had seen these words: 'Write to the Duchess de Lucenay'—upon the bottom of a draft of a letter, which the unfortunate woman had addressed, in her distress, to some person unknown."

"Why could she have wished to write to you?"

"I know not. I am unacquainted with her."

"But she knew you," exclaimed the count, inspired with a sudden thought.

"What do you say?"

"She has heard me a hundred times speak of your father, and of your noble and generous heart. In her distress, she thought of applying to you."

"It may be explained in that manner."

"And how did the marquise obtain possession of the letter?"

"I am ignorant. All that I know is, that she was desirous of finding the mother and daughter, and did not know where they had taken refuge."

"Then I shall rely upon you, Clotilde, to introduce me to the marquise: I must see her to-day."

"It is impossible. Her husband has just been the victim of a terrible accident: a pistol, which he did not know was loaded, accidentally discharged itself, and he was killed on the spot."

"What an awful event!"

"The marquise left instantly, to spend some time with her father, in Normandy."

"Clotilde, I beg of you to write to her to-day: ask her for all the information which she possesses. If she takes an interest in these unfortunate females, she cannot find a more zealous auxiliary than myself. My only desire is to find the widow of my friend, and to share with her and her daughter the little which I possess; for they are now my only family."

"Always the same, always the same—generous and devoted. You may rely upon me; I will write this very day to the Marquise d'Harville. Where shall I send my answer?"

"To Asnières, to be left at the post-office."

"What a strange place of abode! Why don't you live in Paris?"

"I hate Paris, on account of the unpleasant associations which it revives," said the count, with an expression of gloom. "My old physician, Dr. Griffon, with whom I have kept up a correspondence, owns a small country-seat on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières; and as he does not occupy it during the winter, he proposed to me to take it. It is in the immediate vicinity of Paris; and after going through my researches, I should then be able to enjoy the retirement which I covet, and I therefore accepted of his proposition."

"I will then write to Asnières. I can, besides, give you some information which may be useful to you, which I obtained from the Marquise d'Harville. The ruin of Madame de Fermont was caused by the rascality of a notary, in whose hands her fortune was deposited. The notary denied the deposit."

"And what was the name of the wretch?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand," said the duchess, unable to restrain her laughter.

"What a singular being you are, Clotilde! There is nothing but what is most serious and distressing in the subject of our conversation, and yet you are merry!" said the count, surprised and displeased.

In fact, the duchess, at the recollection of the amorous pretensions of the notary, could not restrain her hilarity.

"Pardon me, my dear friend," she said; "but the notary is a very eccentric man, and they say of him very ridiculous things. But seriously, if his reputation for honesty has no better foundation than his reputation for sanctity, he is a great villain."

"Where does he live?"

"In the Rue du Sentier."

"He will receive a call from me. What you say of him, coincides with certain suspicions of my own."

"What suspicions?"

"From certain inquiries which have been instituted, concerning the death of the brother of my friend, I am inclined to believe that, instead of committing suicide, he was the victim of assassination."

"What can induce you to believe such a horrible catastrophe?"

"Several reasons, which would require much time to explain, and I must leave you now. Do not forget the offers of service which you have tendered me in your name and the duke's."

"Will you go without seeing Florestan?"

"The interview, as you may well imagine,

would be very painful to me. I encountered it only with the hope of discovering some information respecting Madame de Fermont, unwilling to neglect any means which might lead to her discovery. Farewell."

"You have no mercy."

"Do you not know ——"

"I know that your son never needed your advice more than at present."

"How? Is he not rich and happy?"

"Yes; but he is not acquainted with men. He is blindly prodigal, because he is confiding and generous in the extreme. He does everything in a magnificent style, and I fear that the kindness of his nature is abused. If you knew how noble his heart is! I have never dared to lecture him upon his extravagance and irregularity. In the first place, because I am as much of a spendthrift as he is, and there are other reasons besides; but you, on the contrary, might ——" The duchess was unable to finish the sentence, for the voice of Florestan de Saint-Remy was suddenly heard. He entered hastily the cabinet next to the saloon, and after having passionately closed the door, said in an altered voice, to some one who accompanied him: "But it is impossible!"

"I repeat to you," replied the clear and piercing tones of M. Badinot, "I repeat to you, that without it, before four o'clock, you will be arrested; for if he does not receive the money soon, the man will lodge his complaint in the hands of the king's attorney, and you know the consequences of a forgery like that: the galleys, my poor viscount!"

CHAPTER XII.

CONVERSATION.

It is impossible to describe the look which the Duchess de Lucenay and Florestan's father exchanged, upon hearing these terrible words: 'It is a case of the galleys for you.' The count turned ghastly pale. He leaned upon the back of a *fauteuil*. His legs sunk beneath him.

His venerable and respected name, dishonoured by a man whom he suspected of being branded with illegitimacy!

When he had recovered from the first shock of amazement, the enraged expression of the aged man, and the threatening character of his gestures, as he advanced towards the cabinet, indicated such a frightful resolution, that the duchess seized him by the hand, and said to him in a low tone, and with an accent of most profound conviction: "He is innocent; I assure you that he is innocent. Hear him in silence."

The count stopped; he was anxious to believe what the duchess had informed him. She was perfectly assured of the probity of Florestan. In order to obtain further sacrifices from her blind generosity, which alone could rescue him from the arrest and persecutions of Jacques Ferrand, the viscount had affirmed to the duchess, that being the dupe of a villain who had imposed upon him a forged draft, he was exposed to the risk of being regarded as an accomplice of the forger, having himself put the draft in circulation. The duchess was well aware that the viscount was imprudent and prodigal, and entirely deficient in any notions of economy; but she not only believed him incapable of any base and infamous transaction, but even of the slightest breach of good faith. Having twice advanced to him very heavy sums to relieve him from his embarrassments, she was desirous only of rendering him a friendly service, but the viscount would never accept the money, only upon the condition of returning it, for people, he said, owed him more than twice the amount. This apparent scrupulousness imposed upon the duchess, who, besides, yielded to the impulse of her feelings, and was only anxious to oblige Florestan, without wasting a thought upon the probability of her loans being returned. He had affirmed that they would be, and she did not doubt it. She was convinced, that upon no other terms he would have accepted the heavy advances which she had made, and she was ready to answer for the honour of Florestan. When she begged his father to listen to the conversation which was about to take place, the duchess supposed that it related to the breach of confidence, of which the viscount had assured her he was the victim; and she supposed that he would be able completely to vindicate himself in the estimation of his father.

"Once more," replied Florestan, in an unnatural tone of voice, "I assure you that Petit-Jean is an infamous scoundrel. He informed me that he had no other drafts but that which I took up three days ago. I thought this one was in circulation. It was payable three months after date, to Adams & Co., London."

"Yes, yes," said the clear and sharp voice of M. Badinot; "I knew, my dear viscount, that you had arranged your plan with great skill; the forgery was only to be discovered when you were far away; but you sought to entrap people gifted with more cunning than yourself."

"It is a fine time to tell me that, you miserable wretch!" exclaimed Florestan, in a furious tone. "Was it not you who brought me in contact with the man, who negotiated these drafts?"

"Come, come, my dear aristocrat," replied Badinot, in a collected tone, "be calm. You can forge commercial signatures, very skilfully; but that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity. If you fly into a passion, I shall leave you to your own resource, and you may get out of the scrape in the best manner that you can."

"And do you think that I can preserve composure in such a situation, if what you tell me is true? If this complaint is to be lodged to-day, in the hands of the king's attorney, I am lost—undone!"

"It is precisely as I say, unless you again resort to your blue-eyed divinity."

"That is impossible."

"Then be resigned! It is a pity, for it is the last draft, and only for a paltry twenty-five thousand francs. To be compelled to breathe the southern breezes of Toulon, is disgraceful, awkward, absurd, silly. How could such an adept as yourself be caught in such a manner?"

"Good God! what shall I do? Nothing in this house belongs to me. I do not possess twenty louis in the world."

"You have friends."

"But I have borrowed of them already, as much as I can. You do not suppose that I am such a fool as to have waited until this late day, without resorting to them."

"That is true; excuse me. But let us talk calmly; that is the only way to arrive at some wise conclusion. I wished to explain to you, a moment since, that you have been dealing with

men more cunning than yourself; but you would not listen to me."

"Speak, I beg of you, if it can be of any service."

"Let us recapitulate. You told me, two months ago: 'I have one hundred and thirteen thousand francs in drafts, on different banking houses, at a long date; find the means, my dear Badinot, of negotiating them for me.'"

"Well, proceed."

"Wait a moment. I asked you to let me see them. I had a kind of vague suspicion that the papers were forged, although it was admirably executed. I did not suspect that you possessed the imitative talent to such an extent; but as I have been intrusted with your fortune, since you have had none, I was thoroughly convinced that you were entirely ruined. I drew up the contract, by means of which your horses and carriages were conveyed to Edwards; and also that which transferred your furniture to Boyer. It was, therefore, with some surprise, that I found you in possession of negotiable paper to such an amount. Do you not think so?"

"I will excuse your surprise, if you will come to the point."

"Hear it is. I possess too much timidity of nature, to mingle directly in affairs of this character; I therefore had resort to a third person, who, no less clear-sighted than myself, suspected the trick which you intended to play."

"It is impossible! he would not have discounted the drafts if he believed them forged."

"How much did he advance on those drafts, which were worth, on the face, one hundred and thirteen thousand francs?"

"Twenty-five thousand francs in cash, and the balance in bills due."

"And how much have you realized from the bills?"

"Not a sous. You know that they were fictitious."

"How very green you are, my dear viscount. Having a hundred louis to receive in commissions if the negotiation succeeded, I had no motive for disclosing to him the exact state of your affairs; and as he supposed that you were still rich enough, and knew that you were adored by an exceedingly wealthy lady, who would never leave you in trouble, he was, therefore, perfectly confident of recovering his funds again; and he was willing to take all the risk of the transaction, for the chance which he had of gaining by it. And the result has proved that he was sagacious in his calculations; for you paid him the other day one hundred thousand francs, to redeem the forged draft for fifty-eight thousand francs; and yesterday, you paid thirty thousand francs for the second. In this last case, he was satisfied to receive the amount due on the face of the draft. How did you procure those thirty thousand francs yesterday? The devil take me if I know; you are a truly wonderful man. To conclude, if M. Petit-Jean compels you to pay this last draft for twenty-five thousand francs, he will have received one hundred and fifty-five thousand francs, for the twenty-five thousand which he paid to you. Therefore, I was correct in my assertion, that you have been dealing with a man more astute than yourself, my dear viscount."

"But why did he tell me that the last draft, which he presents to-day, had been negotiated?"

"So as not to alarm you. He told you before, that with the exception of the draft for fifty-eight thousand francs, the others were in circulation. When the first was fairly paid, the second came in; and now the third."

"The wretch!"

"Hear me; 'every man for himself,' says a celebrated lawyer, whose maxims I admire. This proves to you that Petit-Jean (and between us, I should not be surprised if Jacques Ferrand, with all his renowned sanctity, goes half-and-half with him in these transactions)—this proves to you, as I said, that Petit-Jean, encouraged by your first payment, speculated on this last draft, as he speculated upon the others, convinced that your friends would never suffer you to be brought before a criminal court. It belongs to you to see if their friendship is exhausted, dried up to dust, or whether some drops of gold might not yet be squeezed out of them; for if within three hours, my noble viscount, you have not twenty-five thousand francs, you will be caged."

"If you were to repeat this for ever, it would be of no avail!"

"Perhaps you will consent to pluck, at least, one feather from the wing of the generous duchess?"

"I repeat to you, it cannot be thought of. To raise twenty-five thousand francs within three hours, after all the other sums we have raised, would require superhuman skill."

"To please you, favoured mortal, she would attempt an impossibility."

"She has already exhausted herself. She borrowed one hundred thousand francs from her husband. She cannot do it again. My dear Badinot, you never had any reason to complain of me. I have always been generous; try to obtain from this rascally Petit-Jean some delay. You know I am always able to reward those who serve me. If this affair is hushed up, I shall soar again."

"Petit-Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I?"

"Try once more to interest your generous friend in your melancholy fate. Confess to her the truth. You have already said that you were the dupe; inform her now, that you are the forger himself."

"No; never will I make such a confession. It would increase my shame without any compensating advantage."

"Do you prefer that she shall learn it to-morrow by the *Gazette des Tribunaux*?"

"I have three hours in which I can take flight."

"And where will you go to without money? On the other hand, consider, that if this last draft is paid, you will find yourself in a superb position. You will only be pressed by your ordinary debts. Come, promise me to speak once more to the duchess. You are so acute, and you can render yourself so interesting, in spite of your errors, that if she should learn the worst, she would perhaps esteem you none the less. At all events, she would lift you out of this quagmire. Come, promise to see your fair divinity, and I will run to M. Petit-Jean. I think I can obtain one or two hours of delay."

"Well, I see I must drain the cup of shame to the dregs."

"Come, good luck to you; be tender, passionate, and charming. I will run to Petit-Jean: you will find me there until three o'clock; for after that it will be too late—the office of the

king's attorney closes at four." And M. Badinot went away.

When the door was closed, Florestan was heard to exclaim, in profound despair: "Good God! good God!"

During this conversation—which unveiled to the count the infamy of his son, and to the duchess the infamy of the man she had adored—they had both remained motionless, breathing with difficulty, under this terrible disclosure.

It would be impossible to convey any idea of the mute eloquence of the distressing scene which took place between the young female and the count, when neither of them could any longer doubt the guilt of Florestan. Stretching his arm towards the room where his son was, the aged man cast an overpowering glance upon the duchess, which seemed to tell her: "Here is the man for whom you have braved shame—shrunk from no sacrifice; this is the son whom you reproached me with forsaking!"

The duchess understood the reproach, and her head sunk for a moment under this accumulated weight of shame. The lesson was a terrible one; but by degrees the distressing anxiety which had contracted the features of the duchess, changed into an expression of haughty indignation. The unpardonable guilt of this woman, was at least refined by the sincerity of her love, the self-sacrificing nature of her devotion, the profuseness of her generosity, the frankness of her character, and her unmitigated aversion to everything despicable and mean. She was still too young, too beautiful, and too much admired, to feel any humiliation at the discovery of the mercenary nature of the viscount's attachment. When the illusions of love had vanished, the haughty and decided woman felt neither hatred nor anger; but a mortal disgust and a cold contempt blighted at one blow, the affection which had, until this moment, been so strong. She evinced none of the emotions of a woman who had been basely deceived, but all the scorn and indignation of a high-bred lady, in discovering that a man she had honoured with her society, was a forger and a swindler. Supposing even, that some circumstances had mitigated the unrelieved ignominy of Florestan, the duchess could have never restored him to her favour. According to her mode of thought, the man who could be tempted by vice or folly, to pass the limits of honour, existed no longer in her eyes; honour, in her estimation, being essential to existence. The only painful feeling which mingled with the disgust of the duchess, was her apprehensions for the effect which this frightful disclosure would produce upon her old friend, the count.

For a moment he did not appear to see, hear, or be in any way conscious of the existence of his companion; his head was bent low, his arms hung lifeless, his pallor was ghastly, and a convulsive sigh occasionally shook his strong frame. With a man of such a resolute and energetic character, such despondency was more alarming than the most furious outbreaks of rage. The duchess looked at him with anxiety.

"Courage, my friend," said she, in a low voice, "for your sake, for mine; for that man's, I know what remains for me to do."

The old man fastened upon her a glance, as if he had been dragged from his stupor by some violent emotion; he raised his head, his features assumed a menacing aspect, and forgetting that his son might hear him, he exclaimed: "And I, also, for you, for me, and for that man, know what remains to be done."

"Who is there?" asked Florestan, with surprise.

The duchess, shrinking from being a spectator of the interview which was about to take place, disappeared through the door that led to the private staircase.

Florestan having again demanded, "Who is there?" and receiving no reply, entered the saloon, and found himself alone with the count. The long beard of the old man had changed him so much, he was so meanly clad, that his son, who had not seen him for several years, did not recognise him at first, and even advanced rapidly towards him in a threatening manner.

"What are you doing here? Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"I am the husband of that woman," responded the count, pointing to the portrait of his wife.

"My father!" exclaimed the count, moving back in affright, as he now recalled the features which had escaped from his memory.

Standing erect, with a glance of rage, and a brow flushed, from which the long white locks were thrown back, his arms crossed upon his breast, the menacing aspect of the excited father completely overpowered and crushed his son. The count, with a violent effort, restrained his passion, and attempted to hide his indignation.

"My father," said Florestan, in a changed tone of voice, "you were here——"

"I was here."

"You have heard——"

"Everything."

The viscount covered his face with his hands. A fearful pause ensued.

Florestan, at first amazed and afflicted at the apparition of his father, was now employed in meditating in what manner he could turn the unexpected interview to the best account.

"All is not lost," said he to himself. "The presence of my father is an augury of good fortune; he is acquainted with my guilt, and he will not allow his name to be dishonoured. I must play a close game; skill, cunning, and courage are necessary; I shall not be compelled to resort to the duchess." He now gave to his charming features an expression of deep despondency; he moistened his eyes with the tears of repentance; he assumed the most quavering voice, the most pathetic accent, and exclaimed, clasping his hands with a gesture of despair: "My father, I am most wretched! To meet you at such a moment, after so many years of separation, is most distressing. I must seem to you very culpable; but I beg of you to listen to me, I entreat you to permit me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct. Will you allow me to do it, my father?"

The count did not utter a word; his features remained fixed and impassible. He seated himself in a fauteuil, leaned upon his elbow, and, with his chin resting upon his hand, gazed upon his son in silence.

If Florestan had been aware of the terrible secret that augmented the rage, hatred, and revenge, which the conviction of his son's infamy would have excited in the breast of any father, he probably would not have attempted to deceive him. But, ignorant of the suspicions which rested upon his own legitimacy, ignorant of the crime of his mother, Florestan did not doubt the success of the stratagem which he

proposed to play. He was convinced, that if he could only arouse the count from his misanthropy, he would encounter any sacrifice before he would see his name dishonoured.

"My father," continued Florestan, tenderly, "will you permit me to attempt, not to exculpate myself, but to explain by the force of what circumstances I have been drawn into transactions which I confess to be infamous." The viscount seemed to regard the silence of his father as consent, for he continued: "When I had the misfortune to lose my mother—my poor mother, who loved me so tenderly—I was not twenty years of age. I found myself alone in the world without a counsellor, without a friend, the master of a considerable fortune; and, accustomed to luxury from my chidhood, it was to me a habit and a necessity. Ignorant how difficult it is to earn money, I lavished mine with prodigality, which has been the cause of my ruin. However extravagant my expenses were, they were distinguished for their elegance; and by the finish and perfection of my taste, I eclipsed those who were ten times my superiors in fortune. I was intoxicated by my first success, and I became a man of display, in the manner that other men become warriors and statesmen. Yes, I became fond of pomp; not through gratified vanity at vulgar ostentation, but I loved it as the painter loves his art, as the poet loves poetry, and, like every other artist, I was jealous of my own creations. The exquisite finish of my display was my creation. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I aspired to have it splendid, grand, complete, and harmonious in every department, from my equipage to my table, from my dress to my furniture. I wished that my life might be the impersonation of taste and elegance, and I wished also to insure the applause of the crowd, and the admiration of the *élite*. This rare success I achieved."

While speaking, the face of Florestan lost its hypocritical expression, his eye lighted with a sort of enthusiasm, for he spoke the truth; he had been at first seduced by this rather novel idea of display. The viscount studied carefully the features of his father, who seemed to him to be gradually relaxing his severity.

He continued, with increasing animation: "An oracle and sovereign in the world of fashion, my censure or my praise was a supreme decree. I was quoted, imitated, admired, applauded by the first society in Paris, which is the first in Europe—the first in the world. Women shared the general infatuation: the loveliest and most admired, were ambitious of honouring with their presence the fêtes which I gave; and at all times and in every place, the incomparable elegance and the exquisite taste of these entertainments were eulogised—entertainments which no *millionaire* could either eclipse or equal. I was the monarch of fashion: that phrase, if you understand it, will explain to you all, my father."

"I understand it; and I presume, that in the bagnio you will invent some elegant fashion of wearing your chain, which will be called *à la Saint-Remy*," said the old gentleman, with bitter irony; "and Saint-Remy is my name!" He was again silent, leaning his chin upon his hand.

Florestan had to summon all his powers of self-command, to conceal the wound which this biting sarcasm inflicted. He continued, in a more humble tone: "Alas! my father, it is not through pride that I recall these recollections of my success; for I repeat to you, that this success has been my ruin. Flattered, envied, praised, and caressed, not by interested sycophants, but by people whose rank and wealth were infinitely superior to my own, over whom I had no advantage except that which elegance gives—the same to fashion that taste is to the arts—my head became giddy at the elevation. I did not consider that my fortune would be squandered in a few years; I was even indifferent to such a result. I could not surrender the feverish dazzle of that life, in which pleasure followed pleasure, enjoyment after enjoyment, triumph upon the footsteps of triumph. If you knew, my father, what it is to be everywhere pointed out as the hero of the day, to hear the hum which greets your entrance into the drawing-room, to hear the beautiful whisper to each other: 'He comes,' 'It is he!' If you knew ——"

"I know what you mean," said the old man, without changing his position. "There was a crowd the other day in the public square. A hum was heard all at once, very much like that which greets your entrance into a drawing-room; the eyes of the women particularly were fixed upon a handsome fellow, and they pointed him out to each other, saying: 'It is he,' 'He comes,' exactly as if he had been yourself."

"But that man, my father ——"

"Was a forger, whom they were about nailing to the pillory."

"Ah!" commenced Florestan, with concentrated rage, but which glided rapidly into a tone of deep affliction, as he continued: "My father, you have no mercy. I do not seek to deny my faults, but only to explain to you the manner in which I have been drawn into them. But I will finish my confession, even if you overwhelm me with your sarcasms. I will try to make you understand the feverish vanity which has been the cause of my ruin, and then you will pity me; for people always pity an idiot, and I was one. Closing my eyes, I surrendered myself to the dazzling vortex, into which I bore with me the most charming women and the most fascinating men. How could I stop? As well might you tell the poet, who exhausts all his energy, and whose genius preys upon his heart, to pause in the midst of the inspiration which transports him. No! I could not pause in my career; I could not abdicate the throne upon which I was placed; I could not retire to the vulgar herd, ridiculed and despised; I could not afford this triumph to those malignant enemies, whom I had thus far conquered and crushed; I could not voluntarily capitulate. The fatal day finally arrived, when, for the first time, money failed me. I was as much astonished as if it had been impossible for that moment ever to arrive. Yet I was still master of my horses, carriages, and furniture; I might have still possessed sixty thousand francs; but what could I do with such a trifle? 'Twas here I took the first step in an infamous path. I was yet honest—I had only spent what belonged to me; but I now began contracting debts which I could not pay. I transferred all that I possessed to two of my servants, in order to pay them their wages, and enjoy for six months longer, in spite of my creditors, the splendour which had intoxicated me. To meet my gambling necessities, and various extravagant expenses, I borrowed first from the Jews; and to pay them, I borrowed from my friends, both male and female. When these resources were exhausted, there came a new

crisis in my life. From an honest man, I had sunk into a *chevalier d'industrie;* but I was not yet criminal. I hesitated upon this last brink. I wished to adopt a sure remedy. I had proved in several duels that I was no coward, and I wished to slay myself."

"Indeed you did!" said the count, with wild irony.

"You do not believe it, my father?"

"It was either too soon or too late," said the impassioned old man, in the same attitude.

Florestan, thinking he had moved his father by alluding to his intent to commit self-murder, concluded he would finish the scene by a specimen of theatrical effect. He opened a drawer, and took from it a small phial of blue crystal, and said to the count, placing it on the mantelpiece: "An Italian quack sold me that poison."

"And was it for yourself?" said the old man, in his unchanged position.

Florestan understood his father's inuendo, and his face flashed with a real indignation, for he had spoken the truth.

The passing fancy had crossed his brain to kill himself. But people of his class are too cowardly to meet alone the grim visitant, whom they frequently confront for some point of honour in a famous duel.

He exclaimed, therefore, with the accent of truth: "I have fallen very low, but not so low as that, my father; the poison was intended for myself."

"And you were afraid?" said the count.

"I confess that I shrunk from adopting this final remedy; I was not yet entirely desperate; the people to whom I was indebted were rich, and could afford to wait for their money. At my age, and with my acquaintances, I hoped at least to repair my fortune, if I did not succeed in securing an honourable and independent position. Many of my friends, with less ability than myself, have made rapid advances in diplomacy. I have an ambitious weakness; I only expressed the wish, and I was attached to the Gerolstein embassy. Within a few days afterwards, a gambling debt, which I had contracted to a man whom I hated, placed me in a cruel embarrassment; I had exhausted all my resources, and a fatal temptation assailed my mind. Believing myself certain of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, that I have concealed nothing from you; I have confessed the iniquity of my conduct; I have not sought to extenuate one fault: two alternatives present themselves, and I am not prepared for either. The first is, to kill myself, and leave your name dishonoured; for if I do not pay to-day twenty-five thousand francs, the complaint will be made, the report will spread, and dead or alive, my name will be branded with crime. The second is, to throw myself into the arms of my father, and entreat him to save his son from the galleys, and his name from infamy, and I will promise to start to-morrow for Africa, to enlist as a soldier, to perish on the field of battle, or return with my name restored to the roll of honour. I assure you, that such is my real determination; in the presence of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other resort. As you decide, I either shall die covered with shame, or live to atone for my faults. These are not the empty vaunts of a young man, my father; I am twenty-five years of age, I have courage enough either to kill myself, or become a soldier; I will never go to the galleys."

The count rose from his seat. "I do not wish that my name should be dishonoured," said he to Florestan, sternly.

"My father! my saviour!" exclaimed the viscount, about to throw himself in his father's arms, who with a repulsive gesture calmed his transports.

"They wait for you until three o'clock, in the house of the man who holds the forged draft?"

"Yes, father; and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us pass into your study, and provide me with writing materials."

"Here, father."

The count seated himself before the desk of Florestan, and wrote in a firm hand:—

"I promise to pay, at ten o'clock this evening, twenty-five thousand francs which my son owes.

"COUNT DE SAINT-REMY."

"Your creditor only wants money. In spite of his threats he will grant for this a new delay. He may go to M. Dupont, the banker, No. 7, Rue Richelieu, who will be answerable for the value of this promise."

"Oh, father! how can I ever repay your kindness?"

"You will wait for me at ten o'clock to-night, and let your creditor be here."

"Yes, father; and the day after to-morrow I will start for Africa. You will see if I am ungrateful; and when I am restored to honour, you will accept, perhaps, my thanks."

"You owe me nothing; I have said that my name should not be dishonoured, and it is no idle promise," said the count, taking the cane which he had left upon the table, and advancing towards the door.

"Your hand, at least, my father," said Florestan, in a suppliant tone.

"Here, to-night, at ten o'clock," said the count, refusing his hand, as he departed.

"Saved!" exclaimed Florestan, in a triumphant tone. "Saved, almost!" he repeated, after a moment's reflection. "So long as I am not ruined, it is so much gained. Perhaps to-night I will confess the other thing, since he seems in such excellent humour. He will not stop half-way; he will not suffer that his first sacrifice shall prove unavailing, in order to spare a second. And yet, why should I tell him? Who will ever know it? Never mind, if nothing is discovered, I will appropriate to my own use the money which he gives to me to pay the last debt. I had great trouble to move the headstrong man. The bitterness of his sarcasms made me doubt his good intentions. But my threat of suicide, and the fear of having his name dishonoured, determined him. I aimed at the right spot, and hit it. He is, probably, much less poor than he affects to be. If he possesses a hundred thousand francs, he must have laid up quite a sum by his economical mode of life. I repeat, that his arrival was a perfect godsend. He has a savage look, but I believe, on the whole, he is a good man. But I must hasten to the officers."

The viscount rang the bell, and M. Boyer appeared.

"Why did you not inform me that my father was here? 'twas a great oversight."

"Twice I attempted to speak to you, when you came through the door of the garden, with M. Badinot, but as you were absorbed in con-

versation with him, you gave me a signal not to interrupt you. I could not take the liberty to insist; I should regret that you should believe me guilty of negligence."

"Very well. TellEdwards to put *Orion* and *Plower* to the chariot."

Boyer bowed respectfully. As he was about retiring, some one knocked. Boyer looked at the viscount in an interrogating manner.

"Come in," said Florestan.

A second valet appeared, bearing in his hand a small silver salver.

M. Boyer took the salver with emulous civility, and presented it politely to the viscount.

The latter took from it a somewhat large package sealed with black sealing-wax. The two servants disappeared.

Florestan opened the envelope, and found that it contained twenty-five thousand francs, in treasury notes, but not a word of writing.

"Decidedly," he exclaimed, "this is a lucky day. I am saved now beyond a peradventure. I will hasten to the jeweller's," said he to himself. "No, I will wait; they can have no suspicion of me, and twenty-five thousand francs are serviceable in hand. I was foolish ever to doubt that my star was in the ascendant. At the moment when it appeared the darkest, does it not appear in its most glorious splendour? But from whence came this money? Let me examine the seal. I cannot be deceived; there is an N. and L.; it must be Clotilde. But how did she know of my embarrassment? Not one word accompanies the money, which is very strange. What a fortunate intervention, however! I appointed a meeting with her this morning, but the threats of M. Badinot drove even Clotilde out of my head. After waiting for me down stairs, she probably went away. The package is a delicate means of letting me know that she fears I have forgotten her on account of some financial difficulty. Yes, it is an indirect reproach, for not applying to her. Good Clotilde!—always the same—generous as a queen. What a calamity it was to be compelled to resort to her. I sometimes regret it; but I only adopted it in the last extremity."

"The carriage of the viscount is ready," said M. Boyer.

"Who brought this letter?" asked Florestan.

"I do not know, sir. I will enquire down stairs."

"But tell me if there is no one on the first floor," said the viscount, looking at the valet in a significant manner.

"There is no one at present, sir."

"I was mistaken," thought Florestan. "Clotilde waited for me, but is now gone."

"Would the viscount grant me two minutes?"

"Speak, but be quick."

"Edwards and myself have learned that the Duke de Montbrison wishes to set up an establishment, and if the viscount would propose to him his own, which is so superbly furnished, as well as his stables, which are so completely stocked, it would be an excellent opportunity for us to dispose of the whole; and, as we have supposed, would prove agreeable to the viscount."

"Certainly: you are right, Boyer. I will see Montbrison, and speak to him. What are your conditions?"

"The viscount understands very well, that we must try to improve by his generosity."

"And make money by your bargain—that is perfectly clear. But what is your price?"

"For the whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs, viscount."

"How much profit will you and Edwards realise?"

"About forty thousand, my lord."

"That is doing very well, I must confess; but so much the better for you. I have been pleased with your services, and if I had a will to make, I would have left that sum to you and Edwards."

And the viscount departed, with the intention of seeing his creditor, and afterwards visiting the Duchess de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having overheard the conversation between him and M. Badinot.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

The Hotel de Lucenay was one of those royal habitations of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which was rendered so magnificent by its unobstructed view. A modern house could have easily been placed in the space which was occupied by the staircase of one of these palaces; the ground it covered was equal to an entire square.

About nine o'clock in the evening of the same day, the two folds of the enormous door of this hotel were opened, to admit the entrance of a splendid chariot, which, after describing a perfect circle in the immense court-yard, stopped before a large, sheltered porch, which led to the first antechamber.

The stamping of the two mettlesome and vigorous horses was yet resounding upon the echoing pavement, when a gigantic footman opened the emblazoned porch. A young man slowly descended from this elegant vehicle, and not less slowly ascended the five or six steps of the entrance.

This young man was the Viscount de Saint-Remy.

On leaving his creditor (who, satisfied with the promise of Florestan's father, had granted the delay asked, and agreed to call for his money at ten o'clock in the evening, in the Rue de Chaillot), De Saint-Remy proceeded to Madame de Lucenay's, to thank her for the new service she had rendered him. Not having met the duchess in the morning, he felt in glorious spirits at the certainty of finding her in perfect readiness to receive him, at an hour which she had habitually reserved for himself.

The eagerness with which the two footmen of the antechamber ran to open the glazed door, the moment they recognised the carriage of Florestan, the marked respect exhibited by the other liveried servants, as they spontaneously rose when the viscount passed, and other almost imperceptible evidences, would have induced the belief, that if not the real master of the establishment, he was at least the second in importance.

Whenever the Duke de Lucenay entered, with his umbrella in his hand, and his feet clad in heavy overshoes (for he detested riding in the day-time), the same domestic evolutions were performed, and with equal respect, though a close observer would have noticed a different expression of countenance portrayed, on the reception of the husband, and that of the lover.

The same eagerness was manifested by the servants in the drawing-room, when Florestan entered it; one of them immediately proceeded to announce his arrival to Madame de Lucenay.

Never had the viscount experienced more self-

satisfaction, or felt more sure of his power. His step was that of a conqueror.

The *victory* he had gained over his father that morning—the new proof of the attachment of Madame de Lucenay—the joy of having been so miraculously extricated from his terrible position—a renewed confidence in his lucky star—all gave to his beautiful features an expression of assurance and good-humour that rendered them doubly seducing. Never, in fact, had he felt better or more pleased with himself. And he had cause.

Never had his slender and graceful form been more genteelly or elegantly dressed; never had his pride been more delightfully flattered by the thought, "the mistress of this palace is mine, is at my feet. This morning, in fact, did she not await an interview with me at my own domicile?"

Florestan delivered himself to these vain reflections, while passing through three or four saloons that conducted to an apartment which the duchess usually occupied. A last glance at the mirror tended to confirm the excellent opinion that he possessed of himself.

The servant threw open the two folds of the drawing-room door, and announced: "The Viscount de Saint-Remy."

The astonishment and indignation of the duchess were indescribable. She could not but believe that the count had concealed from his son the fact that she had also heard all ——

We remarked, that on learning the infamous character of Florestan, the love of Madame de Lucenay was extinguished, and had changed to utter contempt. We have also stated, that in the midst of her errors and her inconstancy, Madame de Lucenay had preserved, pure and uncontaminated, sentiments of justice and of honour, and an enthusiastic regard for honesty and uprightness of character. With her faults were blended noble qualities, and with her vices, virtues; treating love as cavalierly as men would treat it, she carried as far, nay farther than they, devotion, generosity, courage, and, above all, a horror of all meanness.

The duchess, attired for her evening's engagement, was, although *without diamonds*, dressed with her usual elegance and good taste. Her splendid toilet, the deep rouge that coloured her checks, even to her eyelids, and which she wore with all the confidence and assurance that characterises a lady of the court; her beauty, surpassingly attractive beneath the brilliant light; her movement, so graceful as to resemble that of a goddess walking upon the clouds, rendered more striking still a majesty of manner that none possessed like her, and which she exhibited, if necessary, to an extent almost amounting to insolence.

With a knowledge of the haughty and determined character of the duchess, imagine the expression of her features when the viscount, with a confident and smiling look, approached her, and said, with affectionate tenderness: "My dear Clotilde, how good you are; how much you ——"

The viscount could not finish.

The duchess was seated, and had not altered her position; but her gesture, her glance, revealed a feeling of contempt, at once so calm and crushing, that Florestan stopped short. He could neither speak a word nor advance another step.

Never had Madame de Lucenay exhibited herself to him under such an aspect. He could not believe that it was the same woman, whom he had always found mild, tender, and passionately submissive; for no being is more humble, or more timid, than a resolute woman before the man she loves, and who rules over her.

His first surprise passing over, Florestan became ashamed of his weakness, and recovered his habitual audacity. Advancing one step towards Madame de Lucenay, for the purpose of taking her hand, he uttered, in a most caressing tone: "My God! Clotilde, what is the meaning of this? I have never seen you look so beautiful, and yet ——"

"Ah! such impudence is intolerable," cried the duchess, recoiling from him with so much disgust and haughtiness, that Florestan was struck with renewed surprise.

Regaining, however, additional confidence, he said to her: "You will at least inform me, Clotilde, the cause of this sudden change? What have I done? What do you wish?"

Without answering him, Madame de Lucenay surveyed him from head to foot, with a look so insulting, that Florestan felt the flush of anger mount to his forehead, and said: "I am aware, madame, that you are accustomed to quarrel with your friends, quite suddenly; do you wish to quarrel with me?"

"Such pretence is curious, indeed!" said Madame de Lucenay, with a sardonic laugh. "Know, sir, that when a lackey robs me, I do not quarrel with him—I discharge him."

"Madame!"

"Enough!" said the duchess, in a short and insolent voice: "Your presence is disagreeable to me. What do you wish here? Have you not received your money?"

"It was true, then? I imagined it was you. These twenty-five thousand francs ——"

"Your last *forgery* has been withdrawn—has it not? The honour of your family is saved. It is well. Begone!"

"Then you believe ——"

"I much regret such a disposition of this money. So many honest persons might have been benefited by it! But it was necessary to think of your father's shame, and of mine."

"So, you know all? Nothing remains for me now, you perceive—but to die!" cried Florestan, in a most pathetic and despairing tone.

An impertinent burst of laughter from the duchess welcomed this tragic exclamation. In the midst of her excess of hilarity, she added: "Oh, heavens! I never could have believed that infamy could be rendered so ridiculous!"

"Madame!" cried Florestan, his features contracted by rage.

At the same instant, the folding doors were hurriedly thrown open, and the Duke de Montbrison was announced. Notwithstanding his usual self-control, Florestan could scarcely restrain the violence of his resentment. It would have certainly been remarked by a man more experienced in society than the duke.

The Duke de Montbrison was scarcely eighteen years of age. Imagine a young girl, with a lovely face, of surpassing fairness, in which the white and the rose are most delicately blended; lips of deepest vermilion; a chin whose satined smoothness is slightly shaded by a down so light that it could scarcely be termed a beard; large, hazel eyes, in which were expressed both the timidity of inexperience and the vivacity of youth; a form as slender as that of the duchess, and some idea may be formed of the appearance of the young duke, who was the very ideality of the Cheru-

bino, the delicate whiteness of whose neck attracted the admiration of the countess and her maid, when they were about to decorate him with a woman's cap.*

The viscount had the weakness or the boldness —we know not which to call it—to remain.

"How amiable you are, Conrad, to have thought of me this evening," said Madame de Lucenay, in a most affectionate tone, and extending her hand to the young duke.

The latter advanced to shake hands with his cousin, but Clotilde elevated her hand gracefully, and said gaily to the duke: "Kiss it, cousin, you have your gloves on."

"Pardon me, cousin," said the youth; and he applied his lips to the ungloved and delicate hand that was presented to him.

"What do you intend doing this evening, Conrad?" asked Madame de Lucenay, without appearing in the least manner to notice Florestan's presence.

"Nothing, cousin. On leaving you, I shall visit the club."

"By no means. You will accompany us—the duke and myself—to Madame de Senneval's. This is her evening. She has already asked me several times to present you to her."

"Cousin, I shall be very happy to place myself at your command."

"I must say, frankly, I do not like to see you so soon accustom yourself to visit these clubs; you possess everything that is necessary to make you welcomed by society, and you will even be considered *recherché* in it. You must, therefore, visit much."

"Yes, cousin."

"And as my relation towards you is somewhat in the light of a grandmother, my dear Conrad, I am disposed to be very exacting. You have attained your majority, it is true; but I fear that it will be for some time that you will require a tutor, and you must resolve to regard me as such."

"With joy and happiness, my cousin," said the young duke, with animation.

It is impossible to paint the silent rage of Florestan, who was still standing and leaning against the mantelpiece. Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid him the least attention. Aware of the decisive character of Madame de Lucenay, he imagined that she was carrying her audacity and contempt for him, while present, even to acts of coquettry with the Duke de Montbrison. It was not so: the duchess absolutely felt for her cousin a species of maternal affection: she had known him from his birth. But the young duke was so handsome, he appeared so happy at the gracious reception of his cousin, that the jealousy, or rather the pride of Florestan, was exasperated; his heart writhed under the cruel gnawings of envy, caused by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and admired, entered so joyously and so splendidly this life of pleasures, of intoxication, and of excitement, which he was leaving, ruined, disgraced, despised, and dishonoured. De Saint-Remy possessed courage, but it was the courage of the head—if that may be so called, which seeks a duel either from anger or vanity; base and corrupt, he had not that courage of the heart which triumphs over bad propensities, or which at least affords the energy necessary to escape ignominy by suicide. Exasperated by the withering contempt of the duchess, and believing that he saw a successor in the young duke, De Saint-Remy resolved to oppose the insolence of the former, and to seek, if necessary, a quarrel with Conrad.

The duchess, irritated at his audacity, did not deign to notice him; and De Montbrison, in his ardour, forgetting the proprieties of society, had neither bowed nor spoken a word to the viscount, although he was acquainted with him.

The latter, advancing towards Conrad, whose back was turned, touched him lightly on the arm, and said, in a dry and ironical tone: "Good evening, sir; a thousand pardons for not having observed you before."

De Montbrison, feeling that he had been wanting in politeness, turned quickly, and said cordially to the viscount: "I confess, sir, that I am somewhat confused; but I hope that my cousin, who is the cause of my abstraction, will make my apologies, and ——"

"Conrad," said the duchess, urged to extremes by the impudence of Florestan, who persisted in remaining, and braving her, "Conrad, it is quite right; no apologies—it is not worth while."

Conrad, believing that his cousin was jestingly reproaching him for his want of courtesy, said gaily to the viscount, who was pale with anger: "I will not insist upon it, sir, since my cousin prohibits me. You see, her tuition has already commenced."

"And this tuition will not stop there, you may rest assured; therefore, under such an expectation—which the duchess is eager to realize, without doubt—under such an expectation, I say, an idea occurs to me: that of making you a proposition."

"To me, sir?" said Conrad, beginning to be displeased at Florestan's sardonic tone.

"To you, yourself. In a few hours, I shall leave, sir, for the Gerolstein embassy, to which I am attached. I wish to dispose of my house, furnished throughout, and of my stable, which is well provided. It is proper *that you should so arrange yourself.*" And the viscount emphasised most insolently the last words, while looking at the duchess. "It would be quite the thing, would it not, madame?"

"I do not understand you, sir," said De Montbrison, with increased astonishment.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer made you," said Clotilde.

"And why cannot he accept my offer, madame?" asked De Remy.

"My dear Conrad," said the duchess, "that which is offered to you for sale, is already sold to others—you comprehend? You would suffer the inconvenience of a highway robbery."

Florestan bit his lips with rage.

"Beware, madame!" he cried.

"What! menaces! here, sir?" cried Conrad.

"Never mind, Conrad; do not regard him," said Madame de Lucenay, helping herself to a lozenge from a small confectionery-box, with most imperturbable *sang froid*. "An honourable man neither should nor would compromise himself with the gentleman. If he insists upon it, I will tell you why."

A terrible altercation was about to take place, when the door was thrown suddenly open, and the Duke de Lucenay entered, with all his usual bluster and precipitancy.

"What, my dear, are you ready so soon?" he said to his wife. "It is wonderful, it is astonishing! Good evening, Saint-Remy—good evening, Conrad. Ah! I am one of the most desperate of men; or, in other words, I neither eat nor

* Marriage of Figaro.

sleep. I am perfectly stupefied. I shall never become reconciled to it. Poor d'Harville! what an event!"

And De Lucenay tumbled himself backwards upon a sofa, threw his hat at a distance with a gesture of despair, crossed his left leg upon his right knee, and seized his foot in his hand, by the way of keeping himself in countenance, uttering all the while the most disconsolate exclamations. The emotion of Conrad and Florestan somewhat subsided before the Duke de Lucenay, generally the most observing of men, discovered it.

Madame de Lucenay—not from embarrassment, for she was not a woman to be embarrassed, but on account of Florestan, whose presence was both repugnant and insupportable to her—said to the duke: "When you are ready, we will go, and introduce Conrad to Madame de Senneval."

"No, no, no!" cried the duke, letting go his foot for the purpose of seizing one of the cushions, which he struck violently with both fists, to the great terror of Clotilde, who, at the unexpected cries of her husband, sprang towards the sofa.

"My good sir! what is the matter with you?" said she to him. "You frighten me terribly."

"No!" uttered the duke; and pushing away the cushion, he started up suddenly, and commenced gesticulating and walking at the same time. "I could not have fancied such an occurrence as the death of this poor d'Harville. And you, Saint-Remy?"

"The occurrence is frightful, indeed," said the viscount, seeking, with rage and hatred in his heart, to catch the eye of De Montbrison; but the latter, after the words of his cousin—not from want of courage, but from pride—refused to notice a man so deeply disgraced.

"Pray, sir," said the duchess to her husband, on rising, "do not evince your regret for M. d'Harville in such a boisterous and singular manner. Ring, if you please, for a servant."

"That is very true," said De Lucenay, seizing the bell-rope. "Only three days ago, and he was alive and well, and to-day, what remains of him? Nothing! nothing! nothing!"

These last three exclamations were accompanied by three jerks, so violent, that the bell-pull which the duke held in his hand, while constantly gesticulating, separated at the upper part, fell upon a candelabra furnished with wax candles, and overturned two of them. One landed upon the mantelpiece, and broke a beautiful Sèvres vase; the other fell upon an ermine rug, which caught fire, but in a moment was extinguished under the feet of Conrad. At the same instant, two footmen, summoned by the violent ringing, entered in haste, and found De Lucenay with the bell-pull in his hand, his wife bursting with laughter at the ridiculous catastrophe, and De Montbrison participating in the hilarity of his cousin.

De Saint-Remy alone did not laugh.

De Lucenay, quite accustomed to accidents of the kind, retained a serious countenance. He threw the cord to one of the servants, and said to him: "The duchess's carriage."

Clotilde, somewhat calmed, observed: "Really, sir, no one in the world but yourself, could have turned such a melancholy event into so laughable an affair."

"Melancholy! call it frightful, call it frightful. Only think, since yesterday, I have been endeavouring to ascertain how many persons there are in my own family, that I would have been willing to have spared in the place of poor d'Harville. My nephew d'Embreval, for instance, who is so tiresome with his stammering; then again, there's your aunt Merinville, who is always talking about her nerves and her megrims, and who swallows daily, while waiting for her dinner, an abominable bason of broth, like a porter's wife. What's your opinion of your aunt Merinville?"

"Fie, sir! you are mad!" said the duchess, shrugging her shoulders.

"But it is true," continued the duke; "for one real friend, we would give twenty for whom we are indifferent. Is it not so, Saint-Remy?"

"Undoubtedly."

"It is always the old story of the tailor. Do you know the story of the tailor, Conrad?"

"No, cousin."

"You will understand the allegory at once. A tailor is condemned to be hung: there was but one tailor in the town; what were the inhabitants to do? They say to the judge: 'We have but one tailor, and three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you to hang one of the shoemakers in the place of the tailor, we shall be able to get along well enough with two shoemakers.' Do you understand the allegory, Conrad?"

"Yes, cousin."

"And you, Saint-Remy?"

"I also."

"The duchess's carriage," said one of the footmen.

"Ah! very well. But why do you not wear your diamonds?" said De Lucenay, suddenly; "they will become such a toilette as yours, to admiration."

Saint-Remy started.

"Considering how rare it is that we go into society together," continued the duke, "you might at least do me the honour of wearing your diamonds. The duchess's diamonds are beautiful; have you ever seen them, Saint-Remy?"

"Yes, the gentleman is quite familiar with them," said Clotilde. "Conrad, your arm."

De Lucenay followed the duchess with Saint-Remy, who could not restrain his anger.

"Do you not go with us to the Sennevals', Saint-Remy?" said the duke to him.

"No, it is impossible," he answered abruptly.

"Hold! Saint-Remy, Madame de Senneval is one of those persons—did I say one? two, I mean—that I would willingly sacrifice, for her husband is also on my list."

"What list?"

"The list of those that I would as lief see die, could d'Harville have remained."

While De Montbrison was assisting Madame de Lucenay in the waiting-room, to put on her mantle, the duke said to him: "Since you are going with us, Conrad, order your carriage to follow ours—unless you conclude to go, Saint-Remy; you can then make room for me, and I will tell you a good story, much better than that of the tailor."

"I thank you," said Saint-Remy, drily; "I cannot accompany you."

"Then adieu, my dear fellow. Have you been quarrelling with my wife? See, she is entering the carriage without speaking a word to you."

The duchess was in fact springing lightly into her carriage, which was in front of the steps of the hotel.

degradation in the midst of opulence is painful. But for the want of proper instruction, the rich classes unhappily have also their miseries, their vices, and their crimes. Nothing is more frequent or more affecting, than the senseless and unfruitful prodigality that we have just described, and which brings in its train, debasement, ruin, and infamy. It is a deplorable, melancholy spectacle, thus to see a beautiful and flourishing wheat-field, irreparably destroyed by a hord of savage beasts. Can it be doubted that property derived by inheritance, is, and ever should be, esteemed sacred and inviolable? Wealth, however, that is acquired, or is transmissible, should be displayed with impunity, and in all its magnificence, to the eyes of the poor and wretched masses. Much time must elapse before the frightful disparity which existed between the *millionaire* Saint-Remy and Morel the artisan, shall cease. But in proportion as these unavoidable disparities are sacred, and are protected by the law, those who possess so much wealth, become the more *morally accountable* to those who possess nought but honesty, courage, resignation, and industry.

In the eyes of reason, of human rights, and even of well-defined social interests, a large fortune should be considered a hereditary deposit, confided to generous, skilful, firm, and prudent men, who, commissioned to increase and distribute it, should also understand the method of fertilising, enlivening, and meliorating the condition of all who might happily fall within the circumference of their large and useful influence.

At times this is so, but the instances are rare.

How many young men, who, like Saint-Remy, become masters, at twenty years of age, of a large patrimony, foolishly dissipate it in idleness, discontent, and vice, from ignorance in understanding how to employ it more beneficially for themselves and others!

Others, alarmed at the instability of worldly things, miserly hoard up wealth with avaricious meanness.

Then there are those again who, knowing that a stationary fortune will dwindle away, become either dupes or knaves, by those immoral and hazardous stock speculations, that the laws encourage and protect.

How could it be otherwise? Who would willingly teach this science, these elements, and these precepts of *individual*, we may even say, *social economy*, to inexperienced youth? No one.

The rich are thrown into the vortex of society with their riches, as the poor with their poverty. No more attention is given to the superabundance of the one, than to the necessities of the other. Moralists give no thought either to the fortunate or the unfortunate. Is it no longer in our power to fulfil the noble duty that is imposed upon us? Shall we not, by taking pity upon the miseries and constantly increasing afflictions of labourers who exhibit such resignation, by quelling an opposition so fatal to all, and by approaching the main question as to the organisation of labour, be able to show the beneficial advantages of the *association of labour and capital* united?

Would not an association of honest, just, and intelligent men, who would guarantee the well-being of the mechanic, without diminishing the fortunes of the rich, and who, in establishing between these two classes ties of affection and gratitude, be able to protect for ever the peace and tranquillity of the State? How powerful would be the consequences of such practical philosophy.

Among the rich, who would then hesitate between the demoralising and dangerous hazards of stock-jobbing, the severe and unsocial enjoyments of avarice, the foolish vanities of a ruinous dissipation, or an investment at once beneficent and productive, which would expand and infuse ease, morality, happiness, and joy, among twenty or more families?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ADIEU.

THE morning after the evening when the Count de Saint-Remy had been so basely duped by his son, a touching scene occurred at Saint-Lazare, during the hour of the recreation of the prisoners. On that day, while the other prisoners were walking about, Fleur-de-Marie seated herself upon a bench, near the green basin, which had already been named the *Bench of Goualeuse*. By a kind of tacit agreement which may be ascribed to the influence of the young girl, the prisoners surrendered to her the seat for which she had so great a preference. Her partiality for this seat was owing to the moss, which, like green velvet, encompassed the reservoir, and recalled to her mind the verdure of the fields, to the same extent as the limpid water with which it was filled, reminded her of the little river of the village of Bouqueval.

To the sad gaze of a prisoner, a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Trusting in the kind promises of the Marquise d'Harville, Fleur-de-Marie had been expecting for two days to leave Saint-Lazare. Although she had no reason to feel uneasy on account of the delay in her liberation, yet, accustomed as she had been to misfortune, she scarcely dared to hope for immediate freedom. Since her return among those creatures, whose appearance and language revived every instant in her soul, the uneffaceable remembrance of her first shame, the sadness of Fleur-de-Marie had continued to increase, and become more oppressive. And that was not all: a new cause for trouble and sorrow, almost frightful to her, had been created by her exalted feeling of gratitude towards Rodolph.

Strange circumstance! she never sounded the depth of the abyss into which she had been plunged, but to measure the distance that separated her from the man whose greatness appeared to her superhuman; of the man whose goodness was as exalted to the worthy, as his power was formidable to the wicked. Notwithstanding the respect which stamped her admiration of him, sometimes, alas! Fleur-de-Marie feared that she recognized in her adoration, evidences of love; though a love that was as concealed as it was deep, as chaste as it was hidden, as desponding as it was chaste.

The unhappy child never dreamed of reading in her own heart, this grievous revelation, until after her interview with the Marquise d'Harville, smitten herself with a passion for Rodolph, of which he was ignorant.

After the departure and the promises of the marquise, it would have been natural that Fleur-de-Marie should have experienced a feeling of delight at the expectation of again seeing Rodolph, and her friends at the Bouqueval farm. It was not so, however. Her heart was sadly wrung. The bitter words, the haughty and

[The Conversation.]

scrutinizing look of the Marquise d'Harville, when the poor prisoner, inspired even to enthusiasm, spoke of her benefactor, constantly presented themselves to her mind. With a singular intuition, Goualeuse had discovered a part of Clemence's secret.

"The warmth of my gratitude for M. Rodolph, has wounded this young lady, so beautiful and of a rank so elevated," thought Fleur-de-Marie. "Now I can comprehend the bitterness of her words; they but expressed a scornful jealousy. She! jealous of me! it must be then that she loves him, and that I love him also; it must be that my love betrayed me, in spite of myself. Love him! I! I! the disgraced, the unworthy, the wretched creature that I am! Death were a thousand times preferable."

Let us hasten our remarks touching this unhappy child, who appeared doomed to suffer absolute martyrdom, in the exaggeration of that which she called *her love*. To her deep gratitude for Rodolph, was joined an involuntary admiration of the grace, the strength, the beauty, that distinguished him among all. Nothing could have been more spiritual, nothing purer, than that admiration; but it existed in all its life and power, for the reason that physical beauty is ever attractive. And then again, the voice of consanguinity, so often denied when it is unknown and concealed, will sometimes make itself heard. These bursts of passionate tenderness for Rodolph, by which Fleur-de-Marie was carried away, and which alarmed her, because in her ignorance she misconstrued their tendency, resulted from mysterious sympathies as evident, and also as incomprehensible, as the resemblance of features. In one word, had Fleur-de-Marie known that she was the daughter of Rodolph, the lively interest she felt in him she could have accounted for; then perfectly enlightened, she

would have admired, without hesitancy, her father's beauty. This explains the drooping despondency of Fleur-de-Marie, although she expected every moment to leave Saint-Lazare, agreeably to the promise of Madame d'Harville.

Melancholy and pensive, Fleur-de-Marie was then seated upon her bench near the basin, observing, with a kind of indifferent interest, the lively movements of some daring birds who were sporting upon the curb. On a sudden, she ceased working upon an infant's frock which she was hemming. It is unnecessary to say that this frock was a portion of the new dresses so generously given to Mont Saint-Jean by the prisoners, thanks to the touching intervention of Fleur-de-Marie.

The poor and deformed *protegé* of Goualeuse was seated at her feet, attentively occupied in completing a small cap: from time to time, she bestowed upon her benefactress a look of gratitude, timidity, and devotion; such as a dog casts upon his master. The enchanting loveliness, the beauty, the adorable sweetness of Fleur-de-Marie, had inspired this degraded woman with as much affection as respect.

There is ever something holy and great, in the aspirations of a heart, however debased, which for the first time awakens to gratitude. Until then, Mont Saint-Jean had never experienced the religious ardour of a sentiment so new to her.

After a few moments, Fleur-de-Marie, with a slight shudder, wiped away a falling tear, and actively recommenced her sewing.

"Then you will not rest from your work during the recreation, my good angel?" said Mont Saint-Jean, to Goualeuse.

"I have given no money to pay for your infant's dresses; I ought to do my part in work," answered the young girl.

"Your part! Heaven be praised! if it had not been for you, instead of this nice white linen, and this warm stuff, I should have had nothing for my child's dresses but those miserable rags, which have been dragged through the mud of the court-yard. It is true, I feel very grateful towards my companions, they have been so good to me; but you! oh, you! what shall I say?" added the poor creature, hesitating and embarrassed, from want of language to express her thoughts. "But stop; there's the sun, is it not? there's the sun."

"Yes, Mont Saint-Jean; go on, I am listening," answered Fleur-de-Marie, inclining her lovely face towards the hideous visage of her companion.

"But you will laugh at me," continued the latter, sadly; "I want to say something, and yet I do not know how."

"Go on, Mont Saint-Jean."

"Your eyes are like those of an angel," said the prisoner, contemplating Fleur-de-Marie with a species of ecstacy; "those kind eyes give me encouragement, and I will try and tell you what I want to say. There's the sun, is it not? It is very warm; it cheers up the prison. It is very pleasant to look at, and to feel, ain't it?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, suppose, then — the sun — it did not make itself, and if we are grateful for it, how much stronger reason there is for ——"

"For being grateful to Him who created it. Is that it, Mont Saint-Jean? You are right: it is God whom we should adore and pray to."

"That's it! that's what I want to say!" cried the prisoner, joyfully; "that's it, I ought to be grateful to my companions; but you! I ought to adore you, Goualeuse, for it is you who have made me so good, instead of the wicked creature that I was."

"It is God that you should thank, Mont Saint-Jean, and not me."

"Oh, yes! you, you; I see you. You have been kind to me yourself, and through you, others."

"But if I am as good as you say I am, Mont Saint-Jean, 'twas God who made me so; you must therefore thank Him."

"Well, perhaps it is so, since you say so," continued the prisoner, in an indecisive tone; "so let it be, if it pleases you."

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint-Jean, pray to Him often; that will be the best way of proving that you love me."

"If I love you, Goualeuse! Oh! you do not remember what you said to the prisoners, to prevent them from beating me. *'It is not her alone that you beat, but her child also.'* Well, it is true that I love you; but it is not only for myself that I love you, but for my child also."

"Thank you, Mont Saint-Jean, thank you; you please me in speaking so."

And Fleur-de-Marie, under the influence of deep emotion, extended her hand to her companion.

"Oh! what a fairy little hand! how white and delicate it is!" said Mont Saint-Jean, drawing back, as if she was fearful of touching that lovely hand with hers, that were so red and uncleanly. After a moment's hesitation, however, she respectfully touched her lips to the end of the tapering and slender-formed fingers that were presented to her; then, kneeling down suddenly, she cast upon Fleur-de-Marie an earnest look of profound gratitude."

"Come and seat yourself beside me," said Goualeuse.

"Oh, no! not that; never! never!"

"Why not?"

"Observe order, as my brave Mont Saint-Jean used to say to me sometimes; officers together, soldiers together, and every one with their equals."

"You are foolish; there is no difference between us."

"No difference? my God! how can you say that, when I see you as I do, as beautiful as a queen? What matters it to you? let me stay on my knees, and look at you as I did just now. Ah, well! who knows? although I am such an ugly creature, my child may, perhaps, look like you. They say that it sometimes happens."

Then, as if in doubt arising from a delicacy almost incredible in such a creature, and fearing that she had wounded the feelings of Fleur-de-Marie by her singular remark, Mont Saint-Jean added, in a melancholy tone: "No, no, Goualeuse; I was only jesting: I did not mean to look at you with such an intention, unless you were willing. My child will be as ugly as I am; what difference will that make to me? I shall not love it any the less, poor miserable little creature! as they say, it did not ask to be born; and if it lives, what will become of it?" she said, with a cast-down look: "Alas! yes; my God! what will become of it?"

Goualeuse shuddered at these words.

What, in fact, could be the fate of that miserable, degraded and despised child? What a lot! what a future!

"Do not give way to such thoughts, Mont

Saint-Jean," said Fleur-de-Marie; "live in hope that your child will find those who will be charitable enough to watch over and protect it."

"Oh, no! you see there is no possible chance for it, Goualeuse," said Mont Saint-Jean, bitterly, and with a dejected air. "My meeting with you was all good luck; and let me say, if it will not offend you, that I had much rather it had fallen to my child than to myself. Such a prayer is all I have to give it."

"Then pray to God, that He will grant it."

"Well, then, I will pray, if it will please you, Goualeuse; perhaps it will make me happier. In fact, who could have thought, when Louve beat me, and I was cuffed about by everybody, that a good little angel would assist me, with her beautiful sweet voice, who would be stronger than all the world, even than Louve herself, who is so strong and wicked."

"Yes; but Louve was kind to you, when she reflected that you were doubly to be pitied."

"Yes, thanks to you, that is true; and I shall never forget it. But, tell me, Goualeuse, why is it, that since yesterday, she has asked to change her quarters? Louve, notwithstanding her bad temper, seemed to be fond of you."

"She is only a little capricious."

"That's very queer. A woman who came this morning from that part of the prison where Louve is, says that she is entirely changed."

"How so?"

"Instead of quarrelling and threatening everybody, she is sad—very sad. She gets into one corner, and if any one speaks to her, she turns her back, and will not answer them. To see her, now, so still and quiet, who was always so noisy, is very strange, is it not? And this woman also told me another thing; but, as for that, I don't believe it."

"What is that?"

"She said she saw Louve crying. Louve cry! it's impossible."

"Poor Louve! It is on my account that she wished to change her quarters. I have offended her without intending it," said Goualeuse, sighing.

"You! you offend any one, my good angel?"

At this moment, the matron entered the yard. After having sought out Fleur-de-Marie, she approached her, and said, with a smile of satisfaction: "Good news, my child."

"What do you say, madame?" cried Goualeuse, rising.

"Your friends have not forgotten you. They have obtained your liberation. The director has just been advised of it."

"Can it be possible, madame? Ah! what happiness is mine!"

The emotion of Fleur-de-Marie was so violent, that her countenance became pallid; she placed her hand upon her beating heart, and fell back upon her seat.

"Calm yourself, my child," said Madame Armand, with affectionate tenderness. "Happily, such shocks are not dangerous."

"Ah! madame, how shall I express my gratitude ——"

"It is the Marquise d'Harville, without doubt, who has obtained your liberty. An elderly woman is waiting to conduct you to those who are interested in you. Wait one moment, and I will return to you. I have a few words to say in the workshop."

It would be difficult to paint the expression of sad desolation, portrayed in the features of Mont Saint-Jean, on learning that her good angel, as she called Goualeuse, was about to quit Saint-Lazare. Her grief was owing less to the fear of becoming the drudge of the prison, than of being separated from the only being who had ever evinced the least interest in her. Still seated at the foot of the bench, Mont Saint-Jean suddenly seized with both hands, the two tufts of bristly hair that hung in disorder from beneath her old black cap, as if to tear them from her head; then, her violent sorrow giving place to an overwhelming despondency, she dropped her head upon both hands, rested her elbows upon her knees, and with her face concealed, she remained silent and immoveable.

Notwithstanding her delight at quitting the prison, Fleur-de-Marie trembled for an instant, at the recollection of Chouette and the Schoolmaster, who had exacted from her an oath, that she would not inform her protector of her unfortunate situation. But these direful thoughts were soon effaced from her mind, at the hope of again seeing at Bouqueval, Madame Georges and Rodolph, to whom she was desirous of recommending Louve and Martial. It seemed to her, even, that the exalted sentiment that she reproached herself for experiencing towards her benefactor, when no longer nourished by grief and solitude, would subside into calmness, when she should again return to the rustic occupations, in which she loved so much to participate with the good and simple inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, the cause of which she did not suspect, Goualeuse touched her shoulder lightly, saying: "Mont Saint-Jean, since I am now free, can I not be useful to you, in some way?"

On feeling the touch of Goualeuse, the prisoner trembled, let fall her arms upon her knees, and turned her tearful face towards the young girl. So heart-rending was the grief that was exhibited upon the countenance of Mont Saint-Jean, that her ugliness almost disappeared.

"Heavens! what is the matter with you?" said Goualeuse, to her. "Why do you weep so?"

"You are going away," murmured the prisoner, in a voice interrupted by sobs. "I have never thought, for a moment, of your leaving here, and that I should never—never see you again."

"I assure you, I shall ever remember your feelings, Mont Saint-Jean."

"My God! my God! to think that I should love you so much! When I was sitting on the ground at your feet, it seemed to me that I was saved; that I had nothing more to fear. It is not because they beat me that I say so, for I can bear that, but I thought you brought good luck to me, for you pitied me. Yes, it is true; when we are accustomed to be badly treated, we feel more strongly the kindness of others." Then, interrupted by renewed sobs, she exclaimed: "Well, go! it is finished—it is finished! It must have happened some day or other. I was wrong in not thinking of it before. It is done! nothing more—nothing more!"

"Come, courage; I shall remember you, as you will always remember me."

"Oh, yes! as for that, they may cut me in a thousand pieces before they will make me disown or forget you. I shall become old—old as the hills; but your beautiful, angelic face, will ever be before my eyes. The first word that I shall teach my infant to speak, will be your name, 'Goualeuse;' for it will be owing to you, that it will not die of cold."

"Listen to me, Mont Saint-Jean," said Fleur-de-Marie, affected by the warmth of the poor creature. "For yourself I can promise nothing, although I am acquainted with charitable persons; but for your child, it is different: it is innocent, and those persons of whom I speak, may perhaps be willing to take charge of it and bring it up, when you can be separated from it."

"Separated from it! Oh! never—never!" exclaimed Mont Saint-Jean, with passionate ardour; "what should I then become, now that I live only for it?"

"But how can you raise it? Whether girl or boy, it should be honest; and in that case ——"

"Yes; it must eat the bread of honesty, must it not, Goualeuse? I am well aware of that; it is my strongest wish; I think of it daily. On leaving here, I will not put my foot again upon a bridge. I will make it pick rags, sweep the streets, do anything to be honest: that is due to oneself, if not to the child, when she has the *honour* of having one."

"But who will take care of your child when you are working?" continued Goualeuse. "Would it not be better, if it is possible, as I hope it is, to place it in the country, among kind people, who will make a good girl of it, or a good farmer? Occasionally, you can go and see it; and on some future day you may be able to live with it: in the country, you know, living is so cheap."

"But to be separated from it—to be separated from it! My whole happiness would be wrapped up in it; I, who have no one to love me."

"You must think more of it than of yourself, my poor Mont Saint-Jean. In two or three days, I will write to Madame Armand; and if the request that I shall make in favour of your child is granted, you will have no further cause for saying what you said just now, and which pained me so much: '*Alas, my God! what will become of it?*'"

Madame Armand, the matron, interrupted the conversation. She came to seek Fleur-de-Marie.

After sobbing with renewed violence, and bathing the hands of the young girl with her tears, Mont Saint-Jean fell backwards upon the bench, in stupid dejection, without even giving a thought to the promise that Fleur-de-Marie had just made concerning her child.

"Poor creature!" said Madame Armand, on leaving the yard with Fleur-de-Marie; "her gratitude towards you, gives me a better opinion of her."

On learning that Fleur-de-Marie was pardoned, the other prisoners, far from feeling jealous at the partiality, testified their delight. Some of them flocked around her, bade her farewell with much cordiality, and frankly congratulated her upon her liberation.

"Never mind," said one of them; "the fair little creature has made us pass one happy moment, when we made up the purse for Mont Saint-Jean's baby. That will be remembered at Saint-Lazare."

When Fleur-de-Marie had quitted the prisoner's building, under the charge of the matron, the latter said to her: "Now, my child, go to the vestry for the purpose of depositing your prisoner's clothes, and resuming the country dress, the rustic simplicity of which became you so well. Adieu! You are about to be made happy; for you will soon find yourself under the protection of worthy and respectable persons, and you quit this building never to enter it again. But stop; I will not be unjust to you," said Madame Armand, whose eyes were moistened with tears: "it is impossible for me to conceal from you, how much I have become attached to you, my poor little one!" Then, noticing that Fleur-de-Marie was also shedding tears, the matron added: "You do not feel sad, I hope, at your departure?"

"Ah! madame, is it not owing to your kind recommendation, that this young lady, to whom I owe my liberty, is interested in my fate?"

"Yes; and what I have done, affords me happiness: my presentiments have not deceived me."

At this moment, the clock struck.

"It is the hour for commencing labour in the workshops: I must return. Adieu, again, adieu, my dear child!" and Madame Armand, as deeply agitated as Fleur-de-Marie, embraced her tenderly. She then said to one of the *employés* of the house: "Conduct the young girl to the vestry."

In a quarter of an hour afterwards, Fleur-de-Marie, clad in country attire, as we have already seen her at the Bouqueval farm, entered the apartment where Madame Seraphin awaited her.

The housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand, had come to conduct this unhappy child to the pirate's island!

CHAPTER XV.

RECOLLECTIONS.

Jacques Ferrand had easily succeeded in obtaining the prompt release of Fleur-de-Marie; the decision of the director of the establishment was all that was necessary, to open the gates. Having received information from Chouette, that Goualeuse was imprisoned in Saint-Lazare, he had immediately applied to one of his clients, an influential man, and informed that there was a young girl who had been committed to this prison for some trifling error, for which she had sincerely repented, and was now in danger of being corrupted by association with more abandoned prisoners, and that, moreover, the young girl had been highly recommended by respectable people, who had promised to take charge of her after her liberation. He therefore entreated his powerful client, in the name of morality, and as he regarded the final restoration of the unfortunate girl to purity, to solicit her immediate release. In order to shield himself against all subsequent investigation, the notary had particularly requested that his own name might not be mentioned in the application. And as this request was attributed to the notary's desire to be unostentatious in his acts of philanthropy, it was scrupulously observed by his client. The liberty of Fleur-de-Marie was solicited and obtained in the name of the client only; who, still further to oblige M. Ferrand, sent to him the certificate for her discharge, that he might restore the young girl to her protectors.

Madame Seraphin, when she gave that order to the matron of the prison, informed her, that she was instructed to conduct Goualeuse to the individual who was interested in her welfare. From the excellent testimonials which the matron had given to the Marquise d'Harville respecting Fleur-de-Marie, no one doubted that she was indebted for her liberation to the solicitation of her ladyship. The housekeeper of the notary,

therefore, excited no distrust in the mind of her victim. Madame Seraphin, when it was necessary, could assume a very amiable appearance. Close observation was necessary, to detect the false, crafty, and cruel expression, that lurked beneath her affable face and hypocritical smile. Notwithstanding the total perversion of this woman's nature, and her connivance and participation in the crimes of Jacques Ferrand, even she was struck with the transcendant loveliness of the young creature whom she had committed in her infancy to the tender mercies of Chouette, and whom she was now leading to inevitable death.

"Well, my dear mademoiselle," said Madame Seraphin, in a honied tone, "you must be very much delighted to leave the prison."

"Oh, yes, madame: I am probably indebted for my release to the intercession of the Marquise d'Harville, who was so kind to me."

"You are not mistaken. But let us hasten, for we are already late, and we have quite a journey to perform."

"We are going to Bouqueval farm, to Madame Georges, are we not?"

"Yes, certainly; we are going into the country to Madame Georges," said the housekeeper, in order to remove all suspicions from her victim's mind. And she added, in a facetious tone: "But that is not all; before you see Madame Georges, a little surprise awaits you. Come, come, our carriage is ready below; what joy you must feel in leaving this place, my dear mademoiselle. Good afternoon, gentlemen," said the housekeeper, bowing to the keeper and his clerk, as she departed with Goualeuse. An assistant followed them, in order to open the gates. The last gate had been just closed, and they found themselves under the vast portico which stretches along the Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis, when they were met by a young girl, who had called, probably, to visit some of the prisoners. It was Rigolette, with a basket on her arm—the gay, laughing, coquettish Rigolette, with her neat little cap, displaying to full advantage her pretty face, and the rose-coloured ribbons upon it, mingling beautifully with the bands of her raven hair. The boots in which her small feet were hid—thanks to the cat-like tread of the charming grisette—were as unsoiled as when she had left her cage, although a long distance intervened.

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, suddenly recognising, at a glance, her companion in the prison, and in her country rides.

"Goualeuse!" the merry voice of the grisette shouted in her turn, as the two lovely creatures threw themselves into each other's arms.

Nothing could have formed a finer study for the artist, than the different style of beauty which these young girls of sixteen possessed, who were now held in each other's embrace.

The one a blonde, with large and melancholy eyes, with a well-defined and perfectly chiselled profile, a somewhat pale and intelligent ideal of one of those country girls of Greuze, so distinguished for the freshness and transparency of their complexion, and the grace and frankness of their expression.

The other, a piquant brunette, with round and rosy cheeks, with black, artless, laughing, wide-awake eyes—a charming emblem of youth, of buoyant cheerfulness—a rare and touching example of happiness in indigence, of friendless honesty, of joy and tranquillity in labour.

After the interchange of their affectionate caresses, the two young beings gazed at each other. Rigolette seemed delighted at the interview—Fleur-de-Marie abashed. The sight of her friend recalled those few days of unblemished purity and unalloyed happiness, which had immediately preceded her degradation.

"What happiness it affords one to meet you!" said the grisette.

"It is indeed a pleasant surprise; it is a long time since we have seen each other," replied Goualeuse.

"Oh! now I am not surprised that I have missed you for the last six months," said Rigolette, observing the rustic dress of Fleur-de-Marie: "you live in the country, then?"

"Yes, for some time," said Goualeuse, casting down her eyes.

"And you have come, like me, to visit some one in prison?" said Rigolette.

"Yes—I came—I have just seen some one," said Goualeuse, stammering in her reply, and blushing, and casting down her eyes in shame.

"And you are now returning home, far from Paris, I presume? Dear little Goualeuse, always the same kind creature, do you remember the poor sick woman to whom you gave your mattress, some clothes, and the little money you had left, when we were about going to spend it in the country? for you were even then quite fond of the country."

"But you did not like it much, Rigolette, and you were so obliging as to accompany me for my pleasure alone."

"For my own, also; for you, who are always so serious, become happy, gay, and merry even, when you once are in the fields and the woods. To see you was a great pleasure to me. But let me look at you again: how becoming that little round cap is! how pretty you are! You were born to wear a peasant's cap; it fits you as naturally as a grisette's cap does me. As you are now living according to your taste, I presume you are happy, and I am not surprised at it. When I lost sight of you, I said to myself: 'That excellent little Goualeuse was never made for Paris; she is a perfect little wild-flower, as the song says, and such flowers cannot bloom in the capital, the air is not pure enough; so Goualeuse has gone to live with some honest people in the country.' That's what has happened to you, is it not?"

"Yes," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"But I have to reproach you for one thing."

"Me!"

"You ought to have told me that you were going; friends should not have parted in the manner that we did; or you should at least have sent me some news concerning yourself."

"I—I left Paris very suddenly," said Fleur-de-Marie, with increasing confusion, "so that I could not inform you of it."

"Oh! I am not angry with you; I am too happy at meeting you again. You were quite right in leaving Paris, it is so difficult to live contented here; and poor girls without any friends may be frequently ruined, without being at all guilty themselves, men are so deceitful. Do you remember little Julia, who was so pretty, and that sweet little Rosine, a blonde, with black eyes?"

"Yes, I remember them."

"Well, my poor Goualeuse, they have both been deceived and forsaken, until, sinking from one misfortune to another, they have become

like the miserable creatures who are confined in this house."

"Good heaven!" said Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her head and blushing.

Rigolette, mistaking the meaning of her companion's exclamation, continued: "They were very culpable and wicked, I confess; but because we, my dear Goualeuse, have had the good fortune to remain honest—you, because you went into the country, to reside with kind-hearted people, and I, because I had no time to waste on lovers, and preferred my birds to all the sweethearts in the world, and because, moreover, I placed my enjoyments in having a nice little room—we ought not therefore to be severe towards others who have been less fortunate than ourselves. Who knows but that poverty, deceit, or accident, may not have been the cause of the bad conduct of Rosine and Julia, and that, in their situation, we might have been tempted to behave like them?"

"Oh!" said Fleur-de-Marie, tenderly, "I do not reproach them, I pity them."

"Come, come! we are in haste, my dear mademoiselle," said Madame Seraphin.

"Allow me a moment, it is such a long time since I have seen my poor Goualeuse," said Rigolette.

"It is already three o'clock, and we have a long distance to go," said Madame Seraphin, not much pleased with this encounter; "I will give you ten minutes more."

"And you?" said Fleur-de-Marie, taking her friend's hand in both of her own; "you have such a sweet temper, that you are always cheerful and happy, I suppose?"

"I was, until within a few days, happy and cheerful; but now——"

"You have trouble?"

"I? Oh, no! You know what a real gay, merry creature I am; but, unfortunately, everybody is not like me, and as they have their sorrows, I must have mine also."

"Always generous!"

"What can I do? I came here to see a poor girl, a neighbour of mine—a perfect angel, who is falsely accused, and deserves all my compassion. Her name is Louise Morel; she is the daughter of a poor artisan, whose misery drove him to madness."

At the name of Louise Morel, the victim of the notary, Madame Seraphin started, and cast a scrutinizing gaze upon Rigolette. The face of the grisette was entirely unknown to her; however, the housekeeper now paid particular attention to the conversation of the young girls.

"Poor creature!" said Goualeuse; "how happy she must feel that you have not forgotten her in her misfortunes."

"And this is not all; I am truly in bad luck, for this is not the first prison which I have visited; I have just come from another—a prison for men."

"A prison for men!"

"Yes, indeed; I have there another friend in great affliction. You see my basket, it is divided into two parts, one for each; to-day, I have brought some clothes to Louise, and I have just carried some articles to poor Germain, my other prisoner's name. I cannot think of the scene which has just taken place between us, without weeping; I know that it is foolish, but I cannot help it."

"And why do you feel so sad?"

"Poor Germain is so distressed in being compelled to associate with the wicked men in that prison; he is completely downcast; he has a taste for nothing, he has lost all his appetite, he will not eat anything which I bring him, and is growing thinner every day. I perceived that he had no appetite, and I said to myself: 'I will make him a nice dish which he liked very much when he was my neighbour.' When I say a nice dish, I mean that it was some excellent yellow potatoes, mashed with some butter and milk; I filled a clean, pretty cup with it, and took it to the prison, and said to him, that I had made it with my own hands, as I used to do when we lived so happily together, and that I thought that it would revive his appetite, but, alas! it did not."

"Why?"

"The moment he saw the cup in which I was in the habit of receiving my milk when he was my neighbour, he burst into tears, and I could not help following his example, although I tried to restrain myself. You see in what miserable luck I am. I thought I was doing well; I thought to console; but instead of that, I made him more sad."

"Yes, but his tears must have been sweet to him!"

"Yet I should have preferred to have afforded some livelier kind of pleasure; but I am talking about him without telling you who he is. He is a former neighbour of mine, the most honest young man in the world; gentle and timid as a young girl, whom I loved like a brother."

"I cannot imagine, then, how his troubles have become yours."

"Can you not? but you will see what an excellent heart he has. When I went away, I asked, as I always do, what he wanted, saying in a laughing manner, 'that I was his little housekeeper, and that I would be very attentive, active, and industrious;' he tried to smile, and asked me to bring him one of the novels of Walter Scott, which he had formerly read to me during the evenings while I was at work; the novel is called *Ivan—Ivanhoe*, that is it; I liked the novel so much, that he read it to me twice. Poor Germain, he was so kind."

"He wishes to revive the recollection of his happy hours."

"Certainly, for he asked me to go to the same reading-room, not to hire, but to buy the books which we formerly read together; yes, to buy them, and you can judge what a sacrifice it must have been for him, for he is as poor as we are."

"Kind, excellent young man!" said Goualeuse, quite moved.

"You are as much affected as I was, my poor Goualeuse, when he entrusted me with that commission. But you will also understand, that the more I tried to laugh the more I felt like weeping; for to cry twice during a visit which I made expressly to cheer him, was rather too much; so in order to amuse him, I began to tell him a funny story about an old Jew, one of the characters in the novel, which had amused us very much, when we read it. But the faster I talked, the faster the big tears would come to his eyes and roll down his cheeks. As for poor me, my heart was almost broken; I had tried with all my might for a quarter of an hour to restrain myself, but I could not, and I finally gave up, and cried as he did. When I left him he was sobbing, and I said to myself,

vexed at my folly: 'If that is the way that I cheer and console him, what is the use of going to see him? It is astonishing in what a manner I have succeeded in making him laugh!'"

At the name of Germain, another victim of the notary, Madame Seraphin redoubled her attention.

"And what has the young man done to be imprisoned?" asked Fleur-de-Marie.

"He?" exclaimed Rigolette, giving vent to her indignation; "he is persecuted by a rascally old notary, who is also the denouncer of Louise."

"Of Louise, whom you have come to this prison to visit?"

"Certainly. She was the servant of this ugly old notary, and Germain was his clerk. It would take too much time to tell you of what he wickedly accuses the young man. But that old villain is perfectly enraged after poor innocent creatures, who have never harmed him in the world. But, patience—patience—each one in his turn."

Rigolette spoke the last words with an accent which gave considerable uneasiness to the exemplary Madame Seraphin, and joining in the conversation herself, she said, in a mellowed voice: "My dear mademoiselle, it is late, and we must go, for our friends are waiting for us. I can imagine that what your companion is telling you, must interest you greatly, for it moves even me, who am a stranger, both to the young man and the young woman. Is it possible there are people so wicked in this world! and what is the name of the notary?"

Rigolette had no reason in the world for suspecting Madame Seraphin, but she remembered, notwithstanding, the caution of Rodolph, who had told her to be silent as to the protection which was extended to Germain and Louise, and she regretted that she had been so far carried away by her feelings, as to say, "patience, each one in his turn."

"That wicked man, madame, is called M. Ferrand," said Rigolette; and then she added, in order to cover her former indiscretion: "It is so much the worse for him to torture Louise and Germain, since they have no one to take any interest in them."

"What a misfortune! I was in hopes that the contrary was the case, when you counselled us to have patience. I thought you relied on some protector to sustain the unfortunate creatures against that wicked man."

"Alas, madame!" added Rigolette, in order to banish entirely any suspicions she might have aroused, "who would be generous enough to take the part of those poor young people, against a man as rich and powerful as M. Ferrand?"

"Oh, there are hearts generous enough for that," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, and with an enthusiasm which she found it difficult to repress. "Yes, I know of one who regards it as his first and highest duty to protect and defend the oppressed. The one of whom I speak is as kind to the honest, as he is severe to the wicked."

Rigolette looked upon Goualeuse in astonishment, and it was on the grisette's lips to tell her companion, thinking of Rodolph, that she also knew of one, who was the champion of the weak against the strong; but faithful to the caution which her neighbour had given her—as she called the prince—she replied to Fleur-de-Marie: "Do you know, indeed, one who is generous enough to assist the poor and unfortunate in that manner?"

"Yes; and although I have promised to implore his compassion and assistance, in behalf of others, I am sure that if he knew of the unmerited misfortunes of Louise and Germain, he would rescue them from this false accusation, and punish their persecutor, for his justice and wisdom are inexhaustible."

Madame Seraphin looked upon her victim with surprise.

"This little girl is more dangerous than we at first supposed," said she to herself. "Even if I had compassion upon her, the last words which she has spoken, would induce me to facilitate the *accident* which is about to befall her, to the extent of my power."

"My dear, good Goualeuse, since you have such a generous friend, I entreat you to recommend to him my Germain and my Louise, for they are undeserving of their fate," said Rigolette, thinking that her friends would be safer with two protectors than with one.

"Depend upon it," said Fleur-de-Marie, "I will exert in behalf of Louise and Germain, all the influence which I possess with M. Rodolph."

"M. Rodolph!" shouted Rigolette, in great surprise.

"Yes, the same," said Goualeuse.

"M. Rodolph! A travelling clerk?"

"I do not know his occupation. But why this surprise?"

"Because I know myself a M. Rodolph."

"Perhaps it is not the same one."

"Let us see. Describe yours."

"He is young."

"That's it."

"A face beaming with magnanimity and kindness."

"The same! just so with mine," exclaimed Rigolette, more and more astonished, as she asked: "Has he brown hair, and does he wear a small moustache?"

"Yes."

"In short, he is tall and slender, with a charming figure, and very genteel appearance for a travelling clerk. Is yours the same?"

"Certainly, it is the same!" said Fleur-de-Marie. "Only it surprises me, that you should think that he is a travelling clerk!"

"I am sure of that, for he told me so."

"Do you know him?"

"Why, he is my neighbour. He occupies a room on the fifth floor, next to mine."

"What, he himself?"

"What is there surprising in that? He earns only fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a year, and he cannot keep a more expensive room; although there is precious little economy about him, for he does not even know what his clothes cost."

"No, no; it cannot be the man I mean," said Fleur-de-Marie, reflecting.

"Is your friend, then, so remarkable for economy?"

"The being to whom I allude, Rigolette," said Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm, "is very powerful; his name is spoken with love and veneration; his presence awes you; and one feels tempted to kneel before his greatness and kindness."

"Then I do not know what to make of the mystery, my poor Goualeuse. Your M. Rodolph is not like mine: he is neither powerful nor

imposing; he is only exceedingly good-natured, and very merry. People don't kneel to him; on the contrary, he offered to help me wax my floor, and agreed to take me to walk on Sundays; so that you see he is no great lord. But what am I talking about? 'twould be a fine thing for me to go and take a walk, while my poor Germain and my poor Louise are in prison!"

For a few moments, Fleur-de-Marie was reflecting deeply. She remembered that, at the time of her first interview with Rodolph, at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, he had the appearance and assumed the language of the habitual guests. Could he not also play the part of a travelling clerk, in the house in which Rigolette lived? But what could be his motive for this new transformation?"

The grisette, observing the thoughtful mood of her companion, said: "It will be of no use to think so much about it, my poor Goualeuse: we cannot ascertain to a certainty whether we are both acquainted with the same M. Rodolph. When you see yours again, speak to him of me, and when I see mine, I will speak to him of you; and in that way we shall learn whether they are one and the same."

"And where do you live, Rigolette?"

"No. 17, Rue du Temple."

"This is valuable information to possess," soliloquized Madame Seraphin, who had listened attentively to the conversation between the young girls. "This M. Rodolph, a mysterious and powerful person, occupies, under the disguise of a travelling clerk, a room in the same house with Bradamanti and the Morels, next to that of the little sempstress, who knows more than she seems to be willing to tell. If the pretended clerk and the grisette continue to interfere with other people's business, it is well to know where to find him."

"When I have spoken to M. Rodolph, I will write to you, and I will give you my address, that you may be able to answer it. But repeat to me yours, so that I shall not forget it."

"I have with me one of the cards which I leave with my employers;" and she gave to Fleur-de-Marie a small card, on which was written, in a very beautiful hand: "*Mademoiselle Rigolette, Rue du Temple, No.* 17." "It looks as if it was engraved, does it not?" added the grisette; "it is the writing of poor Germain, who wrote these cards for me in former days. He was so good and so obliging, and it seems to me that he was endowed with these excellent qualities that I might have a still greater affection for him in his misfortunes. I reproach myself for having so long neglected to love him."

"You love him, then?"

"Indeed, I do. I must certainly have some pretext for visiting him. Confess that I am a singular girl," said Rigolette, now smothering a sigh, now bursting into laughter—now in tears, now in smiles, as the poet says.

"You are as kind and generous as ever," said Fleur-de-Marie, pressing her friend's hand.

Madame Seraphin had probably gained sufficient information to satisfy herself, from the conversation of the young girls, for she said, in an almost severe tone, to Fleur-de-Marie: "Come, come, my dear mademoiselle, let us go; it is already late, and we have lost a quarter of an hour."

"How cross that old woman looks! I do not like her face," said Rigolette, in a low voice, to Fleur-de-Marie. Then she continued, in a louder tone: "When you come to Paris, my poor Goualeuse, do not forget me. Your visit will give me great pleasure. I shall be delighted to pass a day with you, to show you my room and my little birds—my only luxury."

"I will try to come and see you; but I will certainly write to you. Farewell, Rigolette—adieu! You do not know how happy I have been made by seeing you."

"And I, also; but it will not be the last time, I hope. I am impatient to know whether your M. Rodolph and mine are the same: write to me soon upon the subject, I entreat you."

"Yes, yes. Adieu!"

And the two young girls embraced each other tenderly, concealing their emotion.

Rigolette now entered the prison to visit Louise, thanks to the permission which Rodolph had obtained for her.

Fleur-de-Marie entered the carriage with Madame Seraphin, who told the driver to go to Batignolles, and to stop at the barrier. A cross road led almost directly from that place to the banks of the Seine, not far from the Island of the Ravageur. Fleur-de-Marie was so ignorant of Paris, that she did not perceive that the carriage followed a direction opposite to the barrier of Saint-Denis; and it was not until the carriage stopped at Batignolles, that she said to Madame Seraphin, who asked her to alight: "It seems to me, madame, that this is not the direction to the farm of Bouqueval; and how can we proceed on foot from this place to the farm?"

"All that I can tell you, mademoiselle, is, that I am following the instructions of your benefactress; and you will wound her feelings if you refuse to go with me."

"Oh, madame! do not think that I refuse," said Fleur-de-Marie. "You have been sent by them, and I follow you with blind confidence. But tell me, I beg of you, if the health of Madame Georges is good?"

"She is very well indeed."

"And M. Rodolph?"

"Perfectly well, also."

"You know him then, madame? But when I spoke to Rigolette about him, a moment since, you said nothing respecting him."

"Because I had orders to say nothing."

"It is then himself who has ordered you?"

"You are very inquisitive, my dear mademoiselle," said the housekeeper, laughing.

"Pardon my questions, madame," said Fleur-de-Marie, smiling, "Since we go on foot to the place of our destination, I shall soon learn what I am desirous of ascertaining."

"We shall be there, my dear mademoiselle, in the course of a quarter of an hour."

The housekeeper, leaving behind the last houses of Batignolles, walked with Fleur-de-Marie along a turf road. The day was warm and beautiful; the sky was partially veiled with purple-coloured clouds; the declining sun threw oblique rays on the heights of Colombe, the opposite side of the stream. As Fleur-de-Marie approached the banks of the Seine, her pale cheek was slightly flushed, and she inhaled with delight the fresh and bracing air of the country. Her countenance was so radiant with joy, that Madame Seraphin said to her: "You seem to be very happy, my dear mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes, madame! I am about to see again Madame Georges and M. Rodolph, and I have some unfortunate beings to recommend to their protection, whom I hope they will relieve. How

could I be otherwise than happy? Were I sad, however, a day so beautiful as this would dissipate it all. The sky is so cheerful, dappled with those purple clouds; and the grass is so very green, for this season; and yonder, behind those willows, the river is flowing. How broad it appears, and the sun pours upon it such dazzling rays, that they seem like the reflection of gold! Within the little basin, in the prison-yard, it shone in the same manner this morning. God does not withhold from the poor prisoner the rays of the sun," added Fleur-de-Marie, with devout gratitude; and then, as if the recollection of captivity had augmented her rapture at her deliverance, she exclaimed, with all the enthusiasm of artless joy: "Do, madame, see that charming little island in the middle of the river, encircled with willows and poplars; and that white house, near the water. How delightful that house must be in summer, when the trees are covered with foliage! What silence, what coolness, what retirement could be found there!"

"Indeed!" said Madame Seraphin, with a strange smile; "I am delighted that you find the island so pleasant."

"Why, madame?"

"Because we are going there."

"What, to that island?"

"Yes—does it surprise you?"

"I confess that it does."

"And if you were to find your friends there?"

"What do you say?"

"All your friends collected together, to celebrate your release from prison, would you not be agreeably surprised?"

"Can it be possible? Madame Georges, M. Rodolph?"

"Once again, mademoiselle, I have forgotten all my discretion; with your little innocent ways, you worm everything out of me."

"Am I to meet them here? Oh, madame! how my heart beats."

"Do not walk so fast; I can conceive your impatience; but I cannot keep up with you, little crazy thing."

"Pardon me, madame; but I am anxious to arrive."

"It is quite natural, and I do not reproach you for it."

"How the road descends. Will you not take my arm, madame?"

"I cannot refuse it, my dear mademoiselle; you are sprightly and strong, while I am old."

"Lean upon me, madame; do not fear to fatigue me."

"Thank you, my dear; your assistance has been very serviceable; this descent was very steep, but we are on a fine road now."

"Is it true, that I am to see Madame Georges? I can scarcely realise it."

"Have a little more patience. Within a quarter of an hour, you will see her, and you will believe it then."

"What I cannot understand," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, "is, why Madame Georges has left the farm."

"You begin to be inquisitive again, my dear mademoiselle—always inquisitive."

"I am very curious, am I not, madame?"

"To punish you, I have almost a mind to tell you the surprise which your friends are preparing for you."

"A surprise for me, madame?"

"Do not question me—you make me talk in spite of myself."

We will now leave Madame Seraphin and her victim, on their way to the river, and will conduct the reader to the Island of the Ravageur.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOAT.

During the night, the Island of the Ravageur did not belie its actual character, but when the sun was shining in full brilliancy upon it, nothing could appear more delightful than this horrible abode of sin.

It was encircled with willows and poplars, and almost entirely covered with thick grass, while here and there could be discerned winding paths of yellow sand. The island contained a small vegetable garden and a large orchard of fruit-trees, in the centre of which could be seen the hut thatched with straw, to which Martial wished to retire with François and Amandine. That extremity of the island terminated in a sort of embankment formed of posts, to prevent the earth from washing away. An extended arbour stretched from the house to the landing, designed to support, during the summer, branches of the grape-vine and the hop, under which were spread tables for the guests who visited the place.

At one end of the house, which was covered with tiles, there was a wood-shed, and a granary formed from a small wing which was much lower than the main building. Almost directly over this wing could be seen a window, with shutters lined with sheet-iron, and barricaded by two iron bars fastened to the wall by strong hooks. Three boats were floating in the river, fastened to a post of the wharf, in one of which Nicholas could be seen crouching, and trying the action of a valve which he had opened in it; while, standing on a bench by the side of the arbour, Calebasse could be discerned, with her hand up to her eyes, as a sort of blind, and looking earnestly in the direction from which Madame Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie were to approach the island.

"I can see nobody yet, young nor old," said Calebasse, jumping down from the bench, and addressing Nicholas; "it will be as it was yesterday, and our watching will be in vain, if these women don't come in half an hour, for we must then start; the job of Bras-Rouge is better than this one, and he is waiting for us. The brokeress is to be at the Champs Elysées at five o'clock, and Chouette told us this morning that we must be there before her."

"You are right," said Nicholas, leaving his boat; "the valve is in good order, it works like a charm. If this woman makes us wait much longer, we shall lose both of the jobs."

"At any rate, Chouette and Barbillon must have our help; they can do nothing without us."

"That is true, for while the job is going on, Bras-Rouge must be on the outside of his tavern, to keep watch, and Barbillon alone is not strong enough to drag the old woman into the cave, for she will fight like a tigress."

"Did not Chouette tell us, in a laughing way, that she boarded the Schoolmaster in that cave?"

"Not in that one, but in another, which is deeper still, and which is overflowed when the river is high."

"Does it not make him furious to be shut up there all alone, blind as he is?"

"If he had eyes he could not see anything there, for it is as dark as an oven."

"After he has amused himself with singing

all the songs that he knows, he must find it devilish dull there!"

"Chouette says he diverts himself with hunting rats, and the cave is full of that sort of game."

"By the way, Nicholas, speaking of people who are furious, there is one there," said Calebasse, pointing to the window with iron bars, "who must be somewhat snarly."

"He is asleep; he has ceased knocking since morning, and his dog no longer barks."

"Perhaps he has strangled him, in order to eat him; for, as they have been for two days without food, they must both be savage with hunger and thirst."

"That is their own look-out. Martial can play the turtle for a long time yet, but, when he does give in, we can say that he died of some sickness, which will prevent any disturbance."

"Do you think so?"

"To be sure. While going this morning to Asnières, mother met with Ferot the fisherman: as he was surprised not to have seen Martial for two days, mother told him that he was sick, and did not leave his bed, and that we despaired of his life. Father Ferot swallowed it as if it had been honey, and he will report it to the others; so that, when the thing takes place, it will appear quite natural."

"Yes, but he won't die suddenly; it takes a long time to kill a man in that way."

"What else could we do with him?—we couldn't subdue him in any other manner. When Martial once gets mad, there is no managing him—he is as furious as the devil, and strong as hell itself, and as his suspicions were alive, we couldn't have approached him slily; but now that his door is pretty thoroughly nailed up, and his window barricaded, what can he do?"

"He would have broken down the bars of the window by digging at the plaster, if I had not cut his hands with the hatchet every time that he attempted it."

"What sport you had!" said the brigand; "I should have liked that fun myself."

"I had to watch him until you could bring the sheet-iron from Father Micou's."

"How enraged our dear brother must have been!"

"He gnashed his teeth like a man possessed with the devil; two or three times he attempted to knock me down through the bars with his stick, but then having only one hand at liberty, he could not work at the bars, which was all that I wanted to prevent."

"Fortunately, there is no chimney in the room."

"And that the door is solid, and his hands wounded, for otherwise he would be able to make a hole through the floor."

"The beams!—the beams!—do you suppose he could get through them? No, no; there is no danger of his escaping—the blinds are well lined with sheet-iron, and fastened by the bars—the door is nailed upon the outside with spikes three inches long. His coffin is more solid than if it were made of oak or lead."

"What shall we do when Louve leaves her prison and comes to see her man, as she calls him?"

"We will tell her to search."

"Do you know that if mother had not shut up those rascally children, that they would have gnawed away at the door like rats, in order to set Martial free! That little François has become a perfect demon since he suspects we have boxed up the old brother."

"Are they going to be left in the room up-stairs while we leave the island? Their windows have no bars, and they might be able to descend."

At this moment, some cries and sobs were heard from the house, which attracted the attention of Calebasse and Nicholas; they saw the door of the lower room, which was open, shut violently, and within a minute the pale and sinister face of the fiendish mother was seen through the bars of the kitchen window, and she made a signal to her children to approach.

"Come, there is some trouble; I'll bet that it is François again—he is in open revolt. Confound Martial! without his interference, the boy would have worked nicely: keep a good look-out, and if you see the two women approach, call me."

While Calebasse again mounted the bench to watch for Goualeuse and Madame Seraphin, Nicholas went into the house. Little Amandine was on her knees, in the middle of the kitchen, begging mercy for François. Enraged beyond measure, the young boy stood in one corner of the kitchen, brandishing the hatchet of Nicholas, as if he had determined to make a desperate resistance to his mother's will. Silent and impassible as ever, the widow pointed to the door of the cellar, which was partly open, and intimated to Nicholas that it was her pleasure that François should be shut up within.

"I will not be shut up there," said the determined child, whose eyes sparkled like those of a young wild-cat; "you wish to starve Amandine and myself there, as you are starving Martial up-stairs."

"For God's sake, mother, leave us in our room up-stairs, as we were yesterday," said the little girl, in a supplicating tone, and joining her hands; "in that dark cellar, we shall be frightened to death."

The widow looked at Nicholas impatiently, as if to reproach him for not executing her orders, and again pointed to François with an imperious sign.

"If you wish to shut me up there, I do not care whether it is mother, brother, or Calebasse. I shall strike, and the hatchet is sharp."

Nicholas was as well convinced as his mother of the imminent necessity of preventing the children from rendering any assistance to Martial while the house was deserted, and also to hide from them the crimes which were about to be committed; for, from their window, they could see that portion of the river where Fleur-de-Marie was to find her grave.

Nicholas, ferocious as he was, and fearing but little a blow from the hatchet, hesitated to approach his desperate brother. The widow, enraged at the delay of her son, pushed him rudely by the shoulders towards François. But Nicholas, moving back, exclaimed: "When he has wounded me, mother, what shall I do? I shall have need of both my arms soon, and I still feel the blow which the villain Martial gave me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders in contempt, and advanced a step towards François.

"Don't approach me, mother!" exclaimed François, furiously. "I will pay you for all the blows which you have given me and Amandine."

"Brother, suffer yourself to be locked up," exclaimed Amandine; "do not strike our mother!"

Nicholas suddenly saw upon a chair a woollen blanket which had been used for ironing. He seized it, folded it, and skilfully threw it over Frangois's head, who, finding himself suddenly enveloped in its fold, could make no use of his weapon. Nicholas now rushed upon him, and, with the assistance of his mother, forced him into the cellar. Amandine had remained upon her knees in the middle of the kitchen, but as soon as the fate of her brother was decided, she arose, and, notwithstanding her terror, followed him quietly into the cellar.

The door was locked, with a double turn, upon the brother and sister.

"It is, after all, the fault of that villain Martial, that these children are so furious," said Nicholas.

"Nothing has been heard from his room since morning," said the widow, shuddering; "nothing."

"That is what proves that you were right, in telling Father Ferot, the fisherman at Asnières, that Martial had been sick in bed for two days. With that preparation, people will not be surprised."

After a moment's thought, and as if to escape from painful reflections, the widow said: "Did Chouette come here while I was at Asnières?"

"Yes, mother."

"Why did she not remain, to accompany us to the tavern of Bras-Rouge? I mistrust her."

"You seem to be mistrusting everybody, mother. To-day, it is Chouette; yesterday, it was Bras-Rouge."

"Bras-Rouge is at liberty. My son is at Toulon, and they were both engaged in the same theft."

"Why do you always repeat the same thing over? The reason is, that Bras-Rouge is as keen as a razor. Chouette did not remain, because she had an engagement at two o'clock near the Observatory, with the tall man in mourning, for whom she and the Schoolmaster, and Tortillard, carried away the young country girl; and it was Barbillon who drove the hack that the gentleman in black hired for the affair. How, then, can you mistrust Chouette? She tells us her jobs, but we do not tell her ours, for she knows nothing of this drowning affair. Be easy, mother; wolves do not devour each other. We shall make a good business out of the brokeress, who sometimes carries twenty or thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and within two hours we shall have hold of her in the cave of Bras-Rouge. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds!—Think of that!"

"And while we hold the brokeress, Bras-Rouge will keep watch on the outside of his tavern," said the widow, with a suspicious look.

"And where would you have him remain? If some one comes to the house, must he not attend to them? And does he not prevent people from approaching the place where we shall be at work?"

"Nicholas, Nicholas!" shouted Calebasse; "I see the two women."

"Quick, quick, mother! put on your shawl. I will put you ashore; that will be so much gained," said Nicholas.

The widow now put upon her head a black cap, instead of a black handkerchief, enveloped herself in a large tartan shawl of grey and white, closed the door of the kitchen, placed the key behind one of the blinds of the first floor, and followed her son to the landing.

Almost in spite of herself, before quitting the island, she cast a long look towards the window of Martial, frowned, bit her lips, and after a sudden shuddering, muttered: "It is his own fault! his own fault!"

"Do you see them yonder, Nicholas, upon the bank? There is a peasant girl, and a city woman," exclaimed Calebasse, pointing to Madame Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie, upon the other side of the river, who were descending a path which wound round the high bank, where the plaster-kiln was seen.

"Let us wait for the signal," said Nicholas. "Don't let us spoil the job."

"You must be blind! Do you not recognise the large woman, who came here the day before yesterday, in that same orange shawl? See also the little peasant girl—how she hurries along! She must be a good-natured girl, or she does not know what is in reserve for her."

"Yes, I recognise the large woman. Come, it is growing warm—it is growing warm. Now, let us have it all understood between us, Calebasse," said Nicholas. "I will take the old woman and the young one into this boat, with the valve; you will follow in the other, and look out to manage the oar in the right manner, that I may jump at once into your boat, as soon as I have raised the valve."

"Don't be afraid. It is not the first time that I have managed an oar."

"I am not afraid of getting drowned. You know how I can swim. But if I did not get into the other boat, the women, in struggling against drowning, might grasp me, and I have no desire to drink water in their company."

"The old woman makes a signal with her handkerchief; they have now reached the shore."

"Come, come aboard, mother," said Nicholas, releasing the boat. "Come into this boat with the valve, so that the two women may suspect nothing; and you, Calebasse, jump into the other, stretch your arms, and strain away at the oar. Oh, here, take my hook by your side; it is as sharp as a spear, and may be of use. And now let us be off," said the bandit, placing in the boat of Calebasse a long iron hook, with a sharp point.

Within a few minutes, the skiff rowed by Nicholas, and also the one managed by Calebasse, reached the opposite shore, where Fleur-de-Marie and Madame Seraphin had been waiting for several minutes. While Nicholas was fastening his boat to a stake upon the shore, Madame Seraphin approached him, and said, in a low, quick voice: "Say that Madame Georges is waiting for us;" and then added, in a loud tone: "We are somewhat late, my boy."

"Yes, my good lady; Madame Georges has already inquired for you several times."

"You see, my dear mademoiselle, that Madame Georges is waiting for us," said Madame Seraphin, turning to Fleur-de-Marie, who, in spite of her confidence, felt her heart downcast at the frightful faces of the widow, Calebasse, and Nicholas; but the name of Madame Georges restored her tranquillity, and she replied: "I am very impatient to see her, and am happy that it is only a short distance across."

"The dear lady will be delighted." Then, addressing Nicholas, Madame Seraphin said: "Come, my boy, bring your boat nearer, that we may get in;" and added, in a low voice: "She must be drowned, absolutely drowned; if

she rises to the top of the water, you must force her underneath."

"That is enough—enough; and when I make you a signal, give me your hand. She will sink all alone. I have arranged everything, and you have nothing to fear;" and with ferocious composure, unmoved by her touching loveliness, he gave his arm to Fleur-de-Marie, who leaned upon it gently, and entered the boat.

"It is your turn," said Nicholas to Madame Seraphin, as he gave his hand to her.

Was it a presentiment, distrust of her confederate, or only the fear of not jumping quick enough from one boat to the other, that induced the housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand to say to Nicholas, stepping back: "I believe that I will go in the other boat;" and she went to take a seat by the side of Calebasse.

"All right," said Nicholas, exchanging a significant glance with his sister; and with the end of his oar he gave a vigorous impulse to his own boat.

His sister followed his example, as soon as Madame Seraphin had seated herself near her.

Standing motionless upon the shore, and indifferent to the fearful scene which was passing before her, the eyes of the abstracted widow were fastened upon the window of Martial, which could be discerned through the poplar-trees.

The two boats, in the first of which were Nicholas and Fleur-de-Marie, and in the second Madame Seraphin and Calebasse, had slowly left the shore.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HAPPINESS OF MEETING AGAIN.

Before informing the reader of the *dénoûment* of the frightful tragedy which was approaching its consummation, it will be necessary for us to make a retrograde movement. A few moments after Fleur-de-Marie had departed from Saint-Lazare, Louve had also been released from prison, owing to the kind recommendations of Madame Armand and the director, who wished to recompense her for the charitable action towards Mont Saint-Jean, and therefore discharged her from prison a few days before her sentence had expired. Moreover, a complete change seemed to have taken place in the mind of a creature who, heretofore, had been the most corrupt, the most vile, and the most ungovernable. The picture of wild, solitary, and peaceful life which Fleur-de-Marie had drawn, was incessantly displayed before her mind.

To retire to some secluded forest with Martial, was now the controlling idea of her soul; against which her former corrupt instinct had in vain revolted, after she had retired into the other department of the prison, in order to avoid the increasing influence of Goualeuse upon her mind.

To produce this sincere conversion, which had thus far been found strong enough to withstand the ferocious assaults of her own evil habits, and the perverse example of her companions, Fleur-de-Marie, following the impulse of her own good sense, had reasoned in this manner: "Louve is a most violent and resolute creature, and loves Martial with all the strength of her nature. She will, therefore, accept with joy, the prospect of renouncing a life of shame—to which, for the first time, she feels a repugnance—to devote herself entirely to that wild, rough man, with whose inclination she so strongly sympathises—that man who seeks the solitude of the woods, as much through the dictates of his taste, as to avoid the universal anathema which pursues his infamous family." Assisted by these facts, which she had drawn from Louve, by her conversations with her, Fleur-de-Marie had given an honourable direction to the wild love and fierce character of the outcast, and had changed a ruined girl into a woman whose purposes were now honest and commendable.

Confiding in the support which Fleur-de-Marie had promised her, in the name of an unknown benefactor, Louve was now on her way to make the praiseworthy proposition to Martial—not without many bitter fears of refusal; for Goualeuse, in making her blush for the past, had also awoke the consciousness of the nature of her relation to Martial.

When she was once released, Louve only thought of seeking Martial, from whom she had not heard for several days. In the hope of finding him at the Island of the Ravageur, and with the determination of waiting for him there, if she did not find him, she employed the driver of a vehicle, whom she paid well, to convey her rapidly to the bridge of Asnières; over which she passed about a quarter of an hour before the arrival of Madame Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie, to the bank of the river, near the plaster-kiln, whither they had come on foot, from the barrier. When Martial did not himself come with his boat to convey Louve to the island, she had been in the habit of employing an old fisherman, named Father Ferot, who lived near the bridge.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, a carriage stopped near the entrance of one the streets of Asnières, and Louve, having given five francs to the driver, jumped from the carriage, and went in haste to the house of Father Ferot, the fisherman.

Having left behind her the prison uniform, Louve wore a dress of dark green merino; a red shawl, in imitation of cashmere; and a lace cap, ornamented with ribbons. Her hair was hardly combed; for, in her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed with more haste than care. After so long a separation, any other creature would have paid the greatest attention to her dress, in order to present her most attractive appearance at the first interview. But Louve was above all considerations of that kind; all that her warm and earnest temperament desired, was to see Martial with as little delay as possible; not only from the impulse of her passionate love, but also from the wish of confiding to him the salutary resolution which she had adopted during her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie. Louve soon reached the house of the fisherman, and found Father Ferot, an old man, with grey hair, seated before his door, and engaged in mending his nets.

The very moment she came in sight of him, Louve exclaimed: "Your boat, Father Ferot! quick, quick! your boat!"

"Ah! is that you, mademoiselle? good day to you. It is a long time since you have been seen here."

"Yes; but I wish your boat very quick, in order to go to the island."

"It is very unlucky, my good girl; but it is impossible to-day."

"How so?"

"My boy took the boat to-day, to Saint-Ouen, for a boat-race with the rest of them, and there is not a boat left upon the shore for a great distance."

"Confound it!" said Louve, stamping, and clenching her fist; "'tis unlucky for me."

"Upon the word of Father Ferot, I am very sorry that I cannot take you to the island, for, probably, he is worse."

"Worse! Who?"

"Martial."

"Martial!" exclaimed Louve, seizing Father Ferot by the collar. "Is my man sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial?"

"To be sure! Keep quiet, or you will tear my blouse."

"He is sick! and how long has he been so?"

"For two or three days."

"It cannot be; he would have written to me."

"Oh, indeed! he is too sick to write."

"Too sick to write! and are you sure that he is on the island?"

"I will tell you all that I know: I met the Widow Martial this morning. Usually, when I see her coming one way, I take the other. Do you understand? I take the other, because I am not fond of her company."

"But my man! my man! Where is he?"

"I will tell you; wait a moment! Finding myself face to face with the mother, I dared not avoid speaking to her; for her savage look always frightens me, and I cannot help it. 'I have not seen Martial for two days,' said I: 'has he gone to the City?' Upon this she looked at me, with eyes that would have killed, if they had been pistols, as the saying is."

"Go on! go on! You make me boil with impatience."

Father Ferot was silent for a moment, and then said: "You are a good girl; promise to keep it secret, and I will tell you all I know about it."

"About my man?"

"Yes, for I tell you that Martial is a good fellow, although somewhat wild and passionate; and if any evil was to happen to him, by means of his villanous old mother, or scoundrel of a brother, it is too bad."

"But what is the matter?—what have his mother and brother done to him? Speak quick—quick, I say!"

"Come, come, let my blouse alone! Let go of me! you interrupt me all the time, and will tear my clothes into the bargain. I shall never be able to get through my story, and you won't learn anything."

"What patience I need!" said Louve, stamping on the ground with rage.

"Do you agree not to tell anybody what I mention to you?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Upon your word of honour?"

"Father Ferot, you will drive me into fits."

"What a girl! what a girl! What a temper you've got! Well, well; I'll come to the point. In the first place, I must tell you that Martial has been growing upon worse and worse terms with his family, and that I should not be astonished, if they played him some bad trick, and that is the reason I am sorry that my boat is not here; for if you rely upon those of the island to take you there, you will be mistaken, for neither Nicholas nor that ugly Calebasse will take you there."

"I know all that; but what did Mother Martial tell you? Was he taken sick upon the island?"

"Do not puzzle me. Here it is: this morning, I said to the widow: 'It is two days since I have seen Martial. His boat is fastened up. Has he gone to the City then?' Upon this, the widow looked at me in a savage manner, and said: 'He is sick on the island, and so sick that he cannot live.' I said to myself: 'How can that be?—three days ago'——Well, well! where are you going to?" said Father Ferot, interrupting himself. "Where the devil is she running to now?"

With the thought that the life of Martial was in jeopardy, from the hatred of his family, Louve, filled with terror, and transported with rage, could listen no longer to the endless story of the fisherman, but hastened along the banks of the Seine.

Some topographical details may be necessary to a full comprehension of the scene which followed. The Island of the Ravageur was nearer to the left bank of the river than the right, where Fleur-de-Marie and Madame Seraphin had embarked. Louve had passed over to the left bank. Although the banks of the island were not very high, they were sufficiently so to hide from a spectator upon one shore the events which were occurring upon the other; so that Louve was unable to see the embarkation of Goualeuse, and the Martial family equally unable to see Louve running along upon the opposite shore.

Let us likewise remind the reader, that the country-house of Doctor Griffon, which was now occupied by the Count de Saint-Remy, was half-way up the hill, and near the shore where Louve was now running, in great anxiety and deep distress of mind. She passed, without noticing them, two individuals, who, struck with her strange and wild appearance, turned round to follow her. These two persons were the Count de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon. The first impulse of Louve, upon hearing of the danger of her lover, was to hasten with the utmost precipitation to the spot; but, as she approached the island, all the difficulties of reaching it presented themselves. As the fisherman had told her, no boat could be obtained, and she was perfectly convinced that she could expect no assistance from the family of the Martials.

Panting, flushed, and with wild and fiery eyes, she halted opposite to the spot where the island extended its nearest point to the shore. Through the boughs of the leafless willows and poplars, she perceived the roof of the house, beneath which she feared that Martial was dying. Uttering a wild cry at the sight, she threw from her her shawl and cap, and, releasing the hooks of her dress, plunged intrepidly into the river, in her under-clothing alone, and swam for the island with all the vigour and courage of desperation. What a spectacle of wild and unconquerable energy! As she dashed the ruffled waters with her hands, her thick and long tresses fell round her face, like a dark mane, upon which the beams of the sinking sun played. Had it not been for the ardent gaze with which her eye was fastened upon the goal—had it not been for the anguish stamped upon her visage, it would have seemed that the wild mistress of the poacher was disporting in the waves, in wantonness of spirit, so easily and proudly, like a sea-bird, she pursued her watery career. Her white and muscular arms, upon which she bore the tattooed memento of her lover, clove the waves, which dashed around her, and fell like liquid pearls from her broad shoulders and bare bosom, which glistened like submerged marble. A cry of dis-

tress—of terrible agony and despair—now broke from the opposite shore. Louve arrested her wild course, and floated for an instant like a swan upon the water. Sustaining herself with one hand, she threw back with the other her long and drenched hair, and listened with a strained and attentive ear. A new cry now reached her, but feeble, suppliant, gasping; and a profound silence succeeded. "Martial!" said Louve, baffling the waves with redoubled energy. In the excitement of the moment, she thought it was the voice of her lover.

The count and the doctor, whom Louve had passed so hurriedly, could not arrest her deed of rashness. They arrived opposite the island about the moment that the shrieks broke from the opposite shore. They were as much terrified as Louve, and seeing her struggling intrepidly against the waves, exclaimed: "The poor girl will be drowned!" Their fears soon vanished. The brave creature swam as if she was a native of the element: a few sinewy strokes brought her to the land; her foot touched the ground, and she had seized one of the stakes which form the embankment at the termination of the island, to raise herself from the water, when the body of a young peasant girl, buoyed up by her clothing, floated near her in the stream. To seize with one hand the stake, and grasp with the other the dress of the female, was the impulsive movement of Louve. She drew, with so much violence, the unfortunate being whom she wished to rescue, within the range of the stakes, that the body disappeared for an instant beneath the water, although the feet could now rest upon the earth. With extraordinary strength and skill, Louve raised the lifeless form of Goualeuse, whom she had not yet recognised—lifted her, as if she was an infant, in her arms, and walking a few steps in the water, deposited her precious burthen upon the grassy banks of the island.

"Courage! courage!" shouted the Count de Saint-Remy and the doctor, who had observed this heroic rescue, "we will pass over the bridge of Asnières, and come to your assistance in a boat;" and both of them directed their footsteps towards the bridge.

Their words did not reach the ears of Louve.

We must repeat, that from the right bank of the river, where Nicholas, Calebasse, and their mother remained, after the perpetration of their horrible crime, it was absolutely impossible to discern the events which were transpiring upon the other bank. As Fleur-de-Marie had suddenly been drawn within reach of the stakes, by Louve, and had even for a moment disappeared beneath the surface, after which she was no more seen by her murderers, they supposed, of course, that the body of their victim had sunk in the waves. A few moments afterwards, the stream bore along another corpse, unperceived by Louve. 'Twas the body of the notary's housekeeper—dead, hopelessly dead!

Nicholas and his sister were as much interested as Jacques Ferrand himself, in exterminating this witness and accomplice of their crime; and when the valve-boat had sunk with Fleur-de-Marie, Nicholas, in jumping into the one rowed by his sister, had given it a violent shock, and improved the moment, when Madame Seraphin was attempting to regain her equilibrium, to plunge her into the river, and complete her murder by means of his hook.

Exhausted and breathless, Louve was now kneeling by the side of Fleur-de-Marie; and, as she was slowly recovering from her effort, she examined the countenance of the being whom she had rescued from inevitable death. Let her surprise be imagined, when she recognised the well-known features of her prison companion, who had exerted such a sudden and important influence upon her destiny. In the excitement of the moment, Louve for an instant forgot Martial. "Goualeuse!" she exclaimed, leaning upon her hands and knees, her hair disordered and drenched, her clothes dripping with water, bending over the face of the unfortunate girl, who was almost expiring upon the turf. Fleur-de-Marie was pale and motionless; her half-open eye was glazed, as in death; her light and beautiful hair hung close to her temples; her lips were livid; her hands stiff and cold—it seemed as if the spirit had already passed from its lovely tenement.

"Goualeuse!" repeated Louve. "What a singular accident! How much good and how much pain she has caused me by her words and promises, and I was now going to tell Martial the resolution which she had induced me to take. Poor little child! I find her dead! but no, no!" continued Louve, drawing nearer to Fleur-de-Marie, and perceiving the feeble breath which was escaping from her mouth; "good God! she is not dead! she breathes still, and I have rescued her. I never before saved any one from death: how happy I feel; it even warms my heart. But my man! my man! I must save him also: perhaps he is dying this moment, for his mother and brother are capable of murdering him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little innocent. I will take her to the widow's house: I will compel her to aid this poor creature, and to shew me Martial, or else I will tear everything to pieces. I will slaughter every one! What care I for brother, mother, and sister, when my man is there?"

And rising suddenly, Louve bore Fleur-de-Marie in her arms. With her light burden, she hastened to the house, confident that the widow and her daughter, in spite of their wickedness, could not withhold their assistance from Fleur-de-Marie. When she reached that part of the island from which both banks of the Seine could be discerned, Nicholas, his mother, and Calebasse, had departed on their way to the tavern of Bras-Rouge. About the same moment also, a man who was concealed among the plaster-kilns, and who had observed from that ambuscade this horrible scene, disappeared also: thinking, like the murderers, that his fatal design had been fully accomplished. That man was Jacques Ferrand.

One of the boats of Nicholas was still floating in the river, fastened to a stake. Hardly had the notary left the plaster-kiln, when the Count de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon, crossed in haste the bridge of Asnières, expecting to pass over to the island in the boat of Nicholas, which they had seen from a distance.

Louve, to her great surprise, when she reached the house of the Ravageur, found the door locked. Depositing Fleur-de-Marie, who was still senseless, beneath the arbour, she approached the house. She knew the window of Martial's room, and was astonished to see the shutters lined with sheet-iron, and fastened with bars of the same metal. Suspecting a portion of the truth, Louve uttered a wild, loud shriek, and commenced shouting "Martial," with all the strength of her lungs. She heard no reply.

Frightened at the silence, she raved round the house like a beast of prey, who scents but cannot find the entrance to the den where its mate is caged. Now and then she would shout, "Martial, are you there?" and in her fury she shook the bars of the kitchen window, and knocked against the shutters, and kicked against the door.

Upon a sudden, a deep voice answered her from the interior of the house. Louve shuddered, and listened. "My man has heard me," she said, "and I must enter, if I am compelled to gnaw the door with my teeth!" and she again uttered her wild yell.

Several feeble knocks against the inside of Martial's window, responded to her cries.

"He is there!" she exclaimed, halting suddenly beneath the window of her lover. "If it is necessary, I will tear away the iron with my nails, but I will open the window."

With these words, she perceived a long ladder, partly suspended to one of the shutters of the lower room, and, pulling with violence upon the shutter, the key fell down, which was concealed behind it.

"If it is the key," said Louve, thrusting it into the lock, "I can go up to his room. It is the key!" she cried. "Martial is saved!"

When she entered the kitchen, she was struck by the cries of the two children, who, upon hearing an unusual noise, called for help. The widow, not having any reason to apprehend any visit to the island during her absence, had been satisfied with locking in François and Amandine, without removing the key from the door. Released by Louve, the two children rushed, in precipitation, from the cellar.

"Oh! Louve, save our brother Martial!" exclaimed François. "They nailed him into his room two days since, and wish to starve him to death."

"Have they wounded him?"

"I believe not."

"Then I have arrived in time," said Louve, hastening to the staircase; but she halted after ascending a few steps.

"And I had almost forgotten Goualeuse!" he exclaimed. "Amandine, make some fire immediately; and do you and your brother bring near it a poor girl, who is under the arbour, that I have just rescued from drowning. François, a spike, an axe, and a crowbar, that I may break down the door immediately."

"Here is the hammer with which we split wood, but it is too heavy for you!" exclaimed the boy, dragging with difficulty an enormous hammer.

"Too heavy!" exclaimed Louve, and she raised it with ease. Then, hastening up-stairs, four steps at a time, she said to the children: 'Run after the young girl, and place her near the fire."

Quick as lightning, Louve reached the door of Martial, at the end of the passage.

"Courage! courage, my man!—here is your Louve!" she exclaimed, raising the hammer with both her hands, and bestowing a strong blow which shook the door.

"It is nailed from without," said Martial, in a feeble voice; "pull out the nails."

Kneeling down in the passage, with the back of the hammer, with her own nails, which she tore to pieces, and her fingers, which she cut, Louve succeeded in pulling from the floor and door-frame several long spikes. The door finally gave way; and Martial, pale, with his hands wounded and bleeding, fell, almost lifeless, into the arms of Louve.

"At last I see you!—I embrace you!—I hold you in my arms!" said Louve, in an accent of wild and passionate joy. Then, supporting—almost carrying him, she assisted him to a seat on the bench which stood in the passage. For a few moments, Martial remained faint and feeble, scarcely able to recover from the sudden shock, which had very nearly exhausted his remaining strength.

Louve had saved her lover, as he was about to surrender his life in despair—less from the want of food, than from the exhaustion of the atmosphere in a small room, without any fire-place, and almost hermetically sealed; for Calebasse had taken the devilish precaution to stop the least crack in the door and windows, by means of which air might penetrate, with cotton and rags.

With a heart palpitating with anguish and delight, and eyes filled with tears, Louve, upon her knees before him, watched each motion of Martial's countenance. His senses were gradually restored, as his lungs inhaled a purer atmosphere; and, after a few convulsive heavings of his chest, he raised slowly his downcast head, sighed deeply, and opened his eyes.

"Martial, it is I, your Louve—how do you feel?"

"Better," he replied, with a feeble voice.

"Good heaven! What shall I bring you?—water?—vinegar?"

"No, no!" said Martial, less oppressed; "air, air! nothing more."

Louve, at the risk of tearing her hand, smashed three or four panes from a window, which could not have been opened without removing a table.

"I breathe now, I breathe! my head is less oppressed," said Martial, recovering; and as if he had not been conscious until this moment of the service which his mistress had rendered him, he exclaimed: "Without your aid, I should have died, my brave Louve."

"How do you feel now?"

"Better and better."

"Are you not hungry?"

"No; I am too weak. What I suffered most from, was the want of air: I was about smothering. Oh! it was awful—awful!"

"And now ——"

"I am restored from my grave, and I have to thank you."

"But your hands—your hands! these deep cuts! What have they done to you?"

"Nicholas and Calebasse, not daring to attack me in my face a second time, nailed me into this room, that I might starve to death; and while I was attempting to prevent them from nailing up the shutters, my sister cut my hands with the hatchet."

"The monsters! they wished to make it be believed that you had died from sickness. Your mother has already spread the report that you were desperately unwell: your mother, Martial—your mother!"

"Do not mention her!" said he, with bitterness; and then observing, for the first time, Louve's want of clothing, and her dishevelled appearance, he exclaimed: "What has happened to you?—your hair is dripping with water. You have scarcely any clothes upon you, and those are wet."

"Never mind, never mind: you are saved."

"But explain to me why you are so wet."

"I knew that you were in danger; I could find no boat, and ——"

"You swam across!"

"But your hands are wounded—the monsters! You have suffered, and I was not present!"

"My brave Louve!" exclaimed Martial, with enthusiasm: "the bravest of all brave creatures!"

"Did you not write upon this arm, *Death to Cowards!*" and Louve displayed the indelible memento upon her arm.

"You are a perfect heroine; but you shiver with the cold. You are trembling."

"It is not with cold."

"Never mind—go into Calebasse's room; you will find there her cloak, and you must wrap yourself in it."

"But ——"

"I insist upon it."

Within a second, Louve was wrapped in a tartan cloak, and she returned.

"To risk drowning for my sake!" said Martial, surveying his mistress with enthusiasm.

"I have saved a young girl from drowning, on the contrary."

"You saved a young girl?—where is she?"

"Down stairs with the children—they are taking care of her."

"And who is the young girl?"

"If you but knew what a chance—what a fortunate chance it has been!" She is one of my companions at Saint-Lazare—a very extraordinary girl, I assure you."

"How so?"

"Imagine a being that I both loved and hated at the same time; for she placed both happiness and misery in my heart."

"She?"

"Yes, and in relation to you."

"In relation to me?"

"Hear me, Martial;" then, interrupting herself, Louve added: "No, no! I dare not speak it."

"What can it be?"

"I wished to make of you a request, and I started to see you for that express object; for, when I left Pairs, I did not know that you were in danger."

"Speak it, then."

"I dare not."

"You dare not, after what you have done for me?"

"Precisely; for I should seem to be begging for a reward."

"Begging for reward! As if I was not already indebted to you! Did you not nurse me during my sickness last year?"

"Are you not my man?"

"Therefore you should speak frankly to me, because I am, and always shall be your man."

"Always, Martial?"

"Always! true as my name is Martial. There never will be another woman in all the world to me, but you, Louve. Do you hear that? I care not what you are, or have been; I love you, you love me — and I am indebted to you for my life; but since you have been in prison, I am no longer the same man. There has been a great change in me. I have reflected upon it, and am determined that you shall no longer be what you now are."

"What do you mean?"

"I do not wish to leave you. I do not wish to leave François and Amandine."

"Your little brother and sister?"

"Yes; from this day forth, I am determined to be to them as a father; and that, you understand, will impose upon me new duties. It will affect my conduct. I shall be obliged to support them. Nicholas and mother are determined to make perfect brigands of them, and I must remove them from this island."

"To where?"

"I do not know; but I shall take them far from Paris."

"And I?"

"I shall take you, also."

"Take me with you?" exclaimed Louve, in joyful surprise. "I cannot realize the happiness of being never separated from you."

"You shall never be separated, my brave Louve; you will assist me to bring up the children; I know you well, and when I tell you that I wish my little Amandine shall grow up an honest girl, you will speak to her accordingly; I know that you will be to her a good mother."

"Thank you, Martial, thank you."

"We will work like honest labourers; give yourself no uneasiness, we shall find employment, and we will work like slaves, that at least these children may not turn out scoundrels like their father, and the rest of the family. I shall not hear myself called again the son and brother of guillotined men; in short, I will no longer pass the streets where you are known —— But what ails you?"

"Martial, I am afraid that I shall go mad with joy."

"Mad?"

"Yes, it is too great happiness for me."

"What?"

"That which you ask of me; it must have been the rescue of Goualeuse, which has brought this good fortune to me."

"But what ails you?"

"It is the request which you have made me."

"What?"

"I was coming to ask it of you."

"What! to leave Paris?"

"Yes," she replied, with precipitation; "yes, to leave Paris, that I might live with you in the woods, to have there a neat and comfortable house, children also, whom I could love, as Louve would love offspring of yours; and if you wished me, to call you," said the poor outcast, trembling, "my husband, instead of my man, for we could not obtain the situation without that."

Martial, in his turn, surveyed Louve with astonishment, not comprehending to what she alluded.

"What situation do you mean?"

"The situation of gamekeeper."

"Which I should have?"

"Yes."

"And who would give it to me?"

"The protector of the young girl whom I have saved."

"They do not know me."

"But I have spoken to her about you, and she will recommend you to her protectors."

"And why did you speak to her about me?"

"Of what should I speak?"

"Good Louve!"

"And you must know that in prison we have our confidences; and this young girl was so sweet and gentle, that, in spite of myself, I was drawn towards her, and I immediately suspected that she was not one of us."

"Who is she, then?"

[Interview between the Count de Saint-Remy and the Commissary of Police.]

"I do not know; I cannot understand; but my eyes never saw, and my ears never heard, a being like her. She is like a fairy; she reads what is passing in the heart. When I told her how much I loved you, it inspired her with the greatest interest for me. She did not speak harsh words to me; but she spoke of a rude and laborious life, yet tranquilly passed in following pursuits according to your taste, in the woods, only, according to her idea, instead of being a poacher, you would be a gamekeeper; instead of being your mistress, I should be your wife, with fine children, who ran to meet you as you returned from the woods at night, with your gun on your shoulder, and your dog at your heels; after which we could take our supper at the door of our cottage, beneath the tall trees, in the cool of the evening. What shall I say? In spite of myself, I listened to her; it was like a spell, for she speaks so beautifully, that everything she described I saw before me. I thought I saw it, for I was dreaming, though wide awake."

"Oh, yes! it is indeed a glorious life," said Martial, sighing in his turn. "Without being entirely wicked at heart, poor François has been so much with Calebasse and Nicholas, that the air of the woods will be better for him than the City air. Amandine could help you in the house, and I could make as good a gamekeeper as anybody in the world, for I have been a famous poacher. You would be my housekeeper, my brave Louve, and with some little ones, whose merry shouts would ring around us, we should need nothing in the world. When we once became accustomed to a forest life, we should be at home there, and if we lived there for a hundred years, it would pass like one day. But I am a fool: you should not have spoken to me of this glorious life in the woods; it only inspires me with regrets."

"I have allowed you to speak, because you

have said the same things that I expressed to Goualeuse."

"How!"

"When she repeated to me these fairy tales, I said to her: 'How unfortunate it is, Goualeuse, that these castles in the air, as you call them, have no foundation!' Do you know what she replied?" asked Louve, with a countenance, radiant with joy.

"No."

"'Let Martial marry you, and if you will both promise to live honestly, I will obtain the situation of gamekeeper for him, when I leave the prison,' she replied."

"For me?—for me?—the situation of gamekeeper?"

"Yes, yes, for you."

"You are right, Louve; it is only a dream. If it was only necessary to marry you to obtain the place, I would do it to-morrow, if I had the means of supporting you; for, from this day forth, you are virtually my wife, my real wife."

"Your real wife, Martial?"

"My only wife; and I desire that you will hereafter call me your husband, in the same manner as if the ceremony was actually performed."

"Oh! Goualeuse was right! there is a pleasure in speaking of 'Martial, my husband.' You shall see Louve managing your household! you shall see her at work!"

"But the situation, the situation!—do you believe it?"

"If poor little Goualeuse was mistaken, it will be the fault of others; for no one could look at her face while she was speaking, and doubt that she was convinced of the truth of it herself. Besides, when I left the prison, the matron told me that the protectors of Goualeuse were people of great wealth, and the fact that they removed her from prison to-day, proves that they are able to keep their promises."

"What can we be thinking about, Louve?" exclaimed Martial, rising suddenly.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the poor unfortunate girl may be dying down stairs, and we are prating here about our own affairs, instead of relieving her."

"Do not be disturbed; François and Amandine are with her; they would have called us, had there been any danger. But you are right; let us go down and see her—her to whom we are indebted for so much happiness!"

Martial, leaning upon the arm of Louve, now descended with her to the kitchen.

Before introducing them, we will inform the reader of the events which had transpired since Fleur-de-Marie had been committed to the care of the children.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

François and Amandine had conveyed Fleur-de-Marie to the fire in the kitchen, when the Count de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon, who had landed upon the island by means of the boat which Nicholas had left upon the opposite shore, entered the house. While the children kindled a blazing fire, by throwing on dry faggots of poplar, Doctor Griffon devoted his professional skill to the restoration of the young girl.

"The poor child is hardly seventeen," said the count, deeply moved; and addressing the doctor, asked: "What do you think of her case, my friend?"

"Her pulsations are scarcely perceptible; but what is extraordinary in this case is, that the face is not coloured blue, as in ordinary cases of asphyxia from submersion," responded the doctor, with imperturbable coolness, and looking at Fleur-de-Marie with a profoundly meditative air.

Doctor Griffon was a tall, thin man, with a pale visage, and entirely bald, with the exception of two black locks, which were carefully brushed over his temples from the back part of his head. Severe study had traced its lines upon his face and brow, and his expression was stern and intellectual. He was distinguished for his learning, skill, and success, as a practitioner; was principal physician of a civic hospital, where we shall subsequently meet him; and with all these elements of excellence, had but one fault, if we can call it by that name: it was to make of his patients a complete scientific study; to become so completely absorbed in the nature of the disease, whether of the young or the old, the rich or the poor—it made no difference with him—as to think only of the medical facts, more or less curious, which the disorder might develop for the benefit of medical science. In his view, every patient was a *subject*.

"What a charming face! what a beautiful being! in spite of her alarming pallor," said the Count de Saint-Remy, contemplating Fleur-de-Marie with a melancholy expression. "Did you ever see a more mild and innocent expression of countenance, my dear doctor? and do you also observe that she is young, extremely young?"

"Her age has very little to do with the case," said the doctor, roughly; "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which was formerly regarded as mortal. It was a humbug, which the wonderful experiments of the famous Goodwin completely refuted."

"But, doctor ——"

"It is a fact, I assure you," said the physician, absorbed in his art. "To discover if the presence of a foreign liquid in the lungs was fatal, Goodwin plunged dogs and cats, for several seconds, in buckets of ink, took them out alive, and dissected them a few moments afterwards. He became convinced by the dissection, that the ink had penetrated into the lungs, and thus demonstrated that the presence of a liquid in the organs of respiration will not cause death."

The count knew that the physician was an excellent man at heart, and that it was only his scientific infatuation which gave him the appearance of harshness and indifference to suffering.

"But have you not some hope for the poor girl?"

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the physician; "but feeble hope of her recovery remains."

"But to die so young, poor child; what a melancholy thought!"

"Eye-balls fixed and glassy," continued the doctor, coolly raising with his finger the lifeless eyelid of Fleur-de-Marie.

"Strange man!" exclaimed the count, almost indignantly; "and yet I have known you watch for entire nights by my side, and if I had been your brother, you could not have shown me more devotion."

The doctor, while engaged in his examination of Fleur-de-Marie, replied, with undisturbed phlegm: "Do you think that we are presented

every day with an ataxic fever, so wonderfully complicated and so interesting to study, as the one with which you were attacked, my friend? It was admirable! admirable! stupor, delirium, twitchings of the sinews, sycopes, all contributed to diversify its constantly varied symptoms; it was a regular *dead* fever, a very rare case, I assure you. Besides, your constitution was a singular one, which added to the interest which I felt in contemplating the action of the fever upon it. You have always suffered from some singular and anomalous derangement of the nervous action; call it temporary paralysis, if you please. In that point of view alone, your sickness had every claim upon my attention. You presented me with a chance for study which does not occur once in a hundred years; and, to speak to you frankly, my friend, all that I desire in the world is, to meet with another specimen of that magnificent fever. But such a godsend could hardly be expected twice."

The count shrugged his shoulders, as if to indicate that he had no disposition to gratify the curiosity of the doctor again, in his own person.

It was at this moment that Martial descended the stairs, leaning upon the arm of Louve, who had thrown over her drenched garments, as we have mentioned, the cloak of Calebasse.

Struck with the paleness of the appearance of Louve's lover, and seeing also the dried blood upon his hands, the count exclaimed: "Who is this?"

"My husband," replied Louve, looking towards Martial, with an expression of happiness and grateful pride, which it is impossible to portray.

"You have an excellent and heroic wife, sir," said the count to him; "I saw her rescue this unfortunate girl, with the most singular and praiseworthy courage."

"Oh, yes, sir! she is an excellent and brave wife!" replied Martial, emphasizing the last word, and looking in his turn towards Louve, with an enthusiastic and passionate gaze. "Yes, sir; she is a perfect heroine, for she has just saved my life, also."

"Your life!" said the count, surprised.

"Just look at his hands, sir," said Louve, wiping away the tears which softened the savage brilliancy of her eyes.

"It is horrible!" exclaimed the count; "the poor man's hands are cut to pieces: look doctor."

The physician, turning his head slightly, looked over his shoulder at the numerous wounds inflicted by the hatchet of Calebasse, and said to Martial: "Open and close your hand."

Martial executed the motion with considerable difficulty.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and, returning his attention to Fleur-de-Marie, said, in a disdainful tone, in which a perceptible accent of regret mingled: "Pshaw! there is nothing serious in the wounds; no severance of the tendons: the subject will be able to use his hands in a week."

"Is it true, sir, that my husband will not be maimed?" exclaimed Louve, with a voice of gratitude.

The doctor gave a negative shake of his head.

"And Goualeuse, sir?—she will live, will she not?" asked Louve; "she must live. My husband and myself are greatly indebted to her." And turning to Martial, she added: "Here is the poor girl of whom I spoke to you; she it is who may be the cause of our prosperity. She gave to me the idea of coming to you, and placed in my mind all that I have told you. What a happy Providence it was which permitted me to save her."

"She is our guardian angel," said Martial, impressed with the beauty of Goualeuse. "What a heavenly countenance! She will live, will she not, doctor?"

"I do not know," said the doctor; "but in the first place, can she remain here, and receive the necessary attention?"

"Here!" exclaimed Louve; "they murder people here!"

"Hush! hush!" said Martial.

Both the count and the doctor looked at Louve with surprise.

"This house has had a bad reputation in the neighbourhood; and it would not surprise me if what the girl has said is true," said the physician, in a low tone to the Count de Saint-Remy.

"You have then been the victim of violence?" said the count to Martial. "Who inflicted upon you those wounds?"

"It is nothing, sir. I had a dispute here, and a fight ensued, and I was wounded. But this young peasant girl cannot remain here," he added, in a gloomy voice; "neither I nor my wife will remain here, nor my brother and sister, whom you behold; we are all about to leave this island, never to return to it."

"How happy we shall be!" exclaimed the two children in chorus.

"What then shall we do?" said the doctor, looking at Fleur-de-Marie; "it is impossible to think of transporting the subject to Paris in her present prostrate state. My house is near here; my gardener's wife and daughter are excellent nurses; and since this case of asphyxia from submersion interests you, my dear count, you can overlook her attendants, and I will call and see her every day."

"How can you affect the stoic, when you are generous enough to make such a proposition?"

"Why, if the subject dies, which is more than probable, there will be an opportunity of a *post-mortem* examination, which will confirm once more the theory of Goodwin."

"The idea is a frightful one," said the count.

"For him who knows how to read it, the human body is a book, from which one may learn to save the lives of thousands," said the doctor, stoically.

"In fine, you are benevolent," said the count. "What matters the cause, so long as the effect exists? Poor child! the more I look upon her, the more I am interested in her welfare."

"And she deserves it!" said Louve, with enthusiasm, drawing near.

"Do you know her?" asked the count.

"It is to her, sir, that I shall be indebted for my future life—in saving her from death, I have returned the favour which she has conferred upon me."

"And who is she?" asked the count.

"An angel, sir!—the best creature in the world. And although she is dressed as a peasant girl, there is not a lady in the land who can speak as beautifully as she can, with her sweet, musical voice; she is a noble girl, I assure you; courageous and kind."

"By what accident did she fall into the river?"

"I know not, sir."

"She is not a peasant girl, then?" asked the count.

"A peasant girl!—just look at those small, white hands."

"It is true," said the count; "what a strange mystery! but what is her name?—her family?"

"Come," said the doctor, interrupting the conversation, "we must convey the subject to the boat."

"Within half an hour, Fleur-de-Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was carried to the house of the physician, placed in a excellent bed, and was watched with maternal care by the wife of the gardener of M. Griffon, assisted by Louve.

The doctor promised the Count de Saint-Remy, whose interest for the girl increased, to call the very same evening to see her.

Martial started for Paris, with François and Amandine. Louve was unwilling to leave Fleur-de-Marie until she was out of danger.

The Island of the Ravageur was left deserted. We shall soon meet with the infernal beings who dwelt upon it, at the cabaret of Bras-Rouge, where they were to aid Chouette in the murder of the brokeress in diamonds. In the meantime, we will convey the reader to an interview which Tom and Sarah had appointed with the ferocious hag, the accomplice of the Schoolmaster's crimes.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PORTRAIT.

Thomas Seyton, the brother of the Countess Sarah Macgregor, was impatiently promenading upon the Boulevard of the Observatory, when he saw Chouette approaching. The infamous wretch wore a white cap, and was enveloped in a red tartan shawl, and the point of a small stiletto was seen at the bottom of the basket which she carried upon her arm, through which it had penetrated. The murderous weapon was the property of the Schoolmaster. Thomas Seyton did not perceive that Chouette was armed.

"Three o'clock is striking from the Luxembourg; I am punctual, I hope."

"Come on," said the brother of the countess.

Walking before her, he first crossed some waste ground, and then entered a deserted lane, in the neighbourhood of the Rue Cassini, and halted near the centre of the passage, which was closed by a gate. Making a sign to Chouette to follow him, he proceeded a few steps in an avenue filled with evergreens, and saying to her, "Wait for me here," disappeared.

"I hope he won't make me wait long," said Chouette; "I must return to Bras-Rouge's at five, to meet Martial and *settle* the brokeress. Where is my stiletto, by the way? Oh! here the beggar is, looking out of the window!" added the hag; "the reason is, I did not put his cap on:" and she drew the weapon from the basket, and concealed it completely. "'Twas Fourline's tool—and did he not ask it of me, pretending that he wished to kill the rats that troubled him in his cave? No, indeed! poor little animals, they have no amusement or society but his, and as he is but a surly old blind man, they deserve to have a nibble or two at him, and I will not allow him to harm the dear little playthings. I will keep the stiletto. Besides, who knows but I may have occasion for administering it to the brokeress? Diamonds worth thirty thousand francs!—there will be enough to share among us all. It will be a better job than I made out to the notary, whom I supposed that I could force to *shell out* his *blunt*. I threatened him to denounce that it was his housekeeper who sent Goualeuse to me by the hands of Tournemine; but he is not so easily frightened: he called me a liar, and turned me out of doors. Very good! I will pay him! An anonymous letter shall be sent to the people at the farm, informing them that it was the notary who abandoned her; and, as they probably know her parents, it will be hot work for Jacques Ferrand, when she is discharged from Saint-Lazare. But, hold; some one comes. 'Tis the little pale lady who accompanied the tall man in black to the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, and whom Fourline and myself afterwards robbed among the ruins near Notre-Dame," added Chouette, as she saw Sarah approaching from the extremity of the alley. "There is some new job to be got up. It must be for this little lady that we took Goualeuse from the farm. If she is disposed to *tip* handsomely for some new job, I am the woman to do it."

In approaching Chouette, whom she had not seen since her interview with her at the *tapis-franc*, the countess evinced all the contempt and repugnance usual with people of her rank, when they are obliged to come in contact with the wretches whom they wish to make the tools of their crimes. Thomas Seyton, who had thus far actively coöperated with his sister, in all her machinations, although he believed that they would eventuate in no advantage, had refused to play any longer his contemptible part, and had been induced, with a great deal of reluctance, to promote this interview of Chouette with his sister, determining, however, not to be involved in any new stratagem which they might devise. Having been unsuccessful in winning back Rodolph to his allegiance, by severing all the ties of affection which were dear to him, the countess expected to make him the victim of a base deception, by means of which she might realize her visionary hopes. Her intention was to make Rodolph believe that his daughter was not dead, by affirming some orphan girl, whom she could procure, was actually his child. The reader is aware that Jacques Ferrand had obstinately refused to participate in the plot, and had determined to release himself from all danger, by the death of Fleur-de-Marie, fearing the disclosures of Chouette no less than the threats of the countess. But Sarah had not abandoned her design, with the full confidence that she could intimidate the notary, when a suitable girl could be obtained to play the part assigned to her.

After a moment's pause, Sarah said to Chouette: "Are you skilful, discreet, and resolute?"

"Skilful as a monkey, resolute as a bull-dog, silent as a perch. Just as the devil made her, so is Chouette; ready to serve you, if it is in her power—and that she has power, the young country girl who has been shut up in Saint-Lazare for two months, proves."

"I am not thinking concerning her, but of something else."

"Just as you please, my little lady. Provided that there is money at the end of what you propose, we shall be united like these two fingers."

Sarah could scarcely restrain an expression of disgust. "You know, I suppose," said she, "people among the lower classes—unfortunate people?"

"There are more of those than of *millionaires*—a large assortment, from which we can choose. Thank God! there is much rich misery in Paris."

"You must find me an orphan that is poor, and one especially that lost her parents in early life. She must have an agreeable face, a mild disposition, and not over seventeen years of age."

Chouette looked upon the countess with an air of surprise.

"Such an orphan cannot be difficult to find: there are a great many foundlings."

"Look here, my little lady; have you not forgotten Goualeuse, who is just the creature you want?"

"And who is Goualeuse?"

"The young girl we caught at Bouqueval."

"It does not concern her, I tell you."

"But hear me, and reward me for my good advice. You want an orphan, gentle as a lamb, beautiful as the day, not more than seventeen years old: is it not so?"

"Yes."

"Well, take Goualeuse when she leaves Saint-Lazare. You are in as good luck as if she was made up expressly for you. That rascally Jacques Ferrand gave her to me when she was six years of age, in order to get rid of her. Tournemine, who is now at the galleys, brought her to me, saying that she was a child that they wished to dispose of, and pretend that she was dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, do you say?" exclaimed Sarah, in a voice so penetrating, that it startled even Chouette. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand, gave that child to you, and ——"

She could not finish the sentence; her emotion overpowered her; she stretched her arms convulsively towards Chouette; surprise and joy were depicted upon her countenance.

"I can't conceive what it is that excites you in this manner, my little lady. The story is simple enough. Ten years ago, Tournemine asked me if I would take charge of a little girl, whom they wished to get rid of. 'Whether she lives or dies, it is all the same thing; you can make a thousand francs by the bargain, and do with the child whatever you please.'"

"Ten years ago!" exclaimed Sarah.

"Ten years."

"A little blonde?"

"Yes, a little blonde."

"With blue eyes?"

"With eyes as blue as blue-bells."

"And is it the same girl you brought from the farm?"

"Yes. We packed her up for Saint-Lazare; but I must say, that I did not expect to find in that country girl my little Pegriotte."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Sarah, falling upon her knees, and raising her hands and eyes to heaven, "thy designs are impenetrable. I prostrate myself before thy providence. Can such happiness await me? No, no! it is impossible!" Suddenly rising from her knees, she said to Chouette, who gazed upon her with an expression of stupefied wonder: "Come, come!" and she walked before the hag with precipitate steps.

At the end of the alley, she entered the glass door of a cabinet which was sumptuously furnished. As Chouette was about to enter, the countess made her a signal to remain behind, and rang a bell with violence. A servant appeared. "I am at home to no one, and let nobody approach this place; do you hear?—nobody!"

The servant departed. Chouette heard the instructions of the countess to the servant, and saw her draw the bolt. Sarah, turning round towards her, said: "Come in quickly, and shut the door."

Hastily opening a secretary, Sarah drew from it an ebony casket, which she placed upon a writing-desk in the middle of the room, and made a signal to Chouette to approach. The casket contained several cases, which seemed to be appropriated to the jewellery of the countess; and she was in such haste to reach the bottom of it, that she scattered round the table boxes which were filled with splendid necklaces and bracelets of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, of the largest size and the first water.

The sight of Chouette was dazzled. She was armed, alone, shut up with the countess, and flight was easy and secure. An infernal idea passed through the brain of the hag. To accomplish this new crime, it was necessary to draw her stiletto from her basket, and approach Sarah without exciting her suspicion. With the adroitness of the tiger, that creeps stealthily towards its prey, the hag took advantage of the preoccupation of Sarah's mind, to steal around the table which separated her from her victim. Chouette had already commenced her perfidious movement, when she was obliged to halt suddenly, for Sarah drew a portrait from beneath the false bottom of the casket, presented it to the old woman with a trembling hand, and said: "Look at that portrait."

"It is Pegriotte herself!" exclaimed the hag, struck with the resemblance; "that is the same little girl that was brought to me. I see her before me as clearly as when Tournemine delivered her to me; the same long, curly hair, which I immediately cut off and sold to great advantage, upon my word."

"Do you certainly recognise her? Are you sure it is the same? Oh! I beg of you, do not deceive me."

"I tell you, my lady, it is Pegriotte, just as I saw her," said Chouette, attempting to approach nearer without exciting suspicion; "she resembles that portrait, even to this day: if you were to see her, you would be struck with the likeness."

Sarah uttered a cry of pain upon learning that her little daughter had lived for ten years in abandoned misery. Not one pang of remorse, however, penetrated to her heart, for having been the instrument of removing her from the peaceful retreat where Rodolph had placed her. The unnatural mother sought from Chouette no disclosure of the degraded life to which her forsaken daughter had been exposed; ambition had long since annihilated every maternal impulse in her bosom. It was not joy at the discovery of her long-lost child which transported her with rapture; it was the hope of realizing, by her instrumentality, the ambitious dream of her life. Rodolph, without knowing anything about the child, but her misfortunes and her misery, had extended to her all the protecting care of the tenderest charity. What overflowing floods of affection would have gushed from his heart, had the vaguest suspicion flashed upon his mind that she was his own daughter!

He was now single—the countess was also a widow: the long sought crown no danced in her eye.

Chouette, stealthily drawing nearer and nearer to the countess, had now reached the table; the handle of the stiletto was ready for her grasp; she was but a step from the countess.

"Can you write?" said Sarah to her, suddenly; and pushing aside the casket and the jewels, she opened a portfolio.

"No, madame, I cannot write," responded Chouette.

"I will, then, write from your dictation; inform me of all the circumstances of this young girl's abandonment:" and Sarah, seating herself in a *fauteuil* before the writing-table, made a signal to Chouette to draw near.

The eye of the old hag blazed like fire. At last she was standing by Sarah's side, who leaned over the table to write.

"I will read aloud as I write," said the countess; "and do you correct me if I am wrong."

"Yes, madame," said Chouette, eyeing every motion, and placing her right hand in the basket to seize her stiletto.

"I declare that ——;" but interrupting herself, and turning to Chouette, whose hand already grasped the weapon, the countess asked: "At what time was the young girl committed to your charge?"

"In the month of February, 1827."

"And by whom?" asked Sarah, still turned towards Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort, to whom the young girl was surrendered by Madame Seraphin, the housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

The countess resumed her writing, and read in a loud voice: "I declare that in the month of February, 1827, a man named ——"

Sarah now turned again towards the hag, who was already raising the weapon to slay her victim, and was obliged to place the armed hand on the back of the *fauteuil*, to hide her murderous intent. Leaning towards the countess, Chouette seemed prepared to answer the expected question.

"I have forgotten the name of the man who intrusted you with the child."

"Pierre Tournemine," reiterated Chouette.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated the countess, returning to her occupation, "now in the galleys of Rochefort, placed in my hands a child who had been confided to him by the housekeeper of ——"

The sentence was left unfinished, for Chouette, having dropped her basket to her feet, threw herself upon the countess with the violence of a fury. Seizing her by the back of the neck with her left hand, and forcing her face to the table, she drove the stiletto with her right, between the shoulders of the unfortunate lady. The horrid deed was perpetrated with so much rapidity, that the countess did not utter a groan; she remained seated in the chair, with her face bent to the table: the pen had fallen from her hand.

"That same blow Fourline gave to the little old man of the Rue du Roule—the account of one more who will tell no tales, is now settled," said the hag; and gathering up the precious stones, she threw them into the basket, and did not perceive that her victim still breathed.

The murder and the robbery being completed, the old fiend opened the glass door, and hurried rapidly through the avenue of evergreens, and soon reached the vacant ground. Near the Observatory she entered a hackney-coach, which conveyed her to the tavern of Bras-Rouge, on the Champs Elysées. She expected to meet at this den the Widow Martial, Nicholas, Calebasse, and Barbillon, to rob and murder the brokeress of diamonds.

CHAPTER XX.

THE POLICE OFFICER.

The reader is already acquainted with the *Bleeding Heart*, situated on the Champs Elysées, near Cours la Reine, and in one of those vast ditches which abounded in the neighbourhood of that promenade a few years since. The denizens of the Island of the Ravageur had not yet arrived. Since the departure of Bradamanti, who had accompanied the stepmother of the Marquise d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house. Placed as a sentinel at the top of the staircase, the little imp was to announce the arrival of the Martials, as Bras-Rouge was at that time engaged in a private conference with a police-officer, called Narcisse Borel, whom the reader perhaps remembers at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, when he appeared there for the purpose of arresting two villains suspected of murder. The officer was a man of about forty years of age, with a stout and vigorous frame, a florid complexion, and completely shaved, in order to assume the various disguises which his profession rendered necessary; for he had to unite the dexterity of a comedian to the courage of a soldier, to succeed in arresting certain bandits, against whom he had to struggle with equal courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in short, one of the most useful and efficient instruments of the public authorities.

Let us join the private conference of the officer and Bras-Rouge, which had already become somewhat animated.

"Yes," said Borel, "you are accused of taking a double advantage of your position—of participating in the thefts of a very dangerous set of malefactors, and of giving false information respecting them to the authorities. Beware, Bras-Rouge! if it is discovered, but little mercy will be shown you."

"Alas! I know that I am accused, and nothing is more distressing to me, my dear Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his cat-like visage an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope to-day, at least, justice will be done me; that I shall be raised above the malice of my enemies, and that my sincerity will be universally acknowledged."

"We shall see! we shall see!"

"How can people mistrust me? Have I not been sufficiently tried? Have I not put you on the track of the most notorious criminals? Did I not secure the arrest of Ambrose Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors of Paris? for, as it is said, he was a chip of the old block—and the race of Martials came from the devil, whither, I doubt not, it will return."

"All this is very good—very excellent! but Ambrose was informed that he was about to be arrested, and if I had not anticipated the hour which you appointed, he would have escaped us."

"Do you believe me capable, M. Narcisse, of informing him of your approach?"

"What I know, is, that I received a ball when I closed with the brigand, which, very luckily, only passed through my arm."

"People in your profession are frequently exposed to such mistakes."

"Do you call that a mistake?"

"Certainly, for without doubt the rascal intended to lodge a ball in your body."

"In the arm, the body, or the head, that is not what I complain of—each profession has its vexations."

"And its pleasures also, M. Narcisse."

"Its pleasures!"

"Yes, for when a man as dexterous and courageous as you are, has been for a long time on the track of a horde of brigands, pursuing them from place to place, and from den to den, with such an excellent pointer as your servant, Bras-Rouge, and at last finds them in a trap from which they cannot escape, confess, M. Narcisse, that you have all the delights of the sportsman, in springing upon them, to say nothing of the services which are rendered to justice by their capture."

"I should agree with you perfectly, if the pointer was faithful; but I have my suspicions."

"Oh, M. Narcisse! do you believe——"

"I believe that instead of placing me on the right track, you amuse yourself with leading me astray, and thus abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to lay our hands upon this gang, but the day never arrives."

"And if that day should prove to be this very evening, as I am sure it will be; if I cause you to catch Barbillon, Nicholas, the widow, her daughter, and Chouette, will that be a good haul? answer me, yes or no. Can you mistrust me after that?"

"No; you will have rendered a great service, for we have against the whole of that gang strong suspicions, but no proof."

"So a little bit of flagrant crime, by giving us an excuse for pouncing on them all at once, will help amazingly to square their accounts—eh, M. Narcisse?"

"And are you sure, that you are not an accomplice in the crime which they are about to commit?"

"Upon my honour, it was Chouette who came to propose it to me. She wished me to attract the brokeress to my house, when she learned, by means of my son, that Morel the lapidary, who lived in Rue du Temple, worked in real diamonds, and that Mother Mathieu always carried with her jewels to a considerable amount. I accepted the job, and proposed to unite with the Martials and Barbillon, in order to place the whole gang in your hands."

"And the Schoolmaster—that man who is so strong and ferocious, who was constantly seen with Chouette in the *tapis-franc*?"

"The Schoolmaster!" said Bras-Rouge, affecting astonishment.

"Yes; an escaped convict from the bagnio at Rochefort—a fellow by the name of Anselme Duresnel, who was sentenced for life. He has disfigured himself, so that he cannot be recognised. Have you no idea where he can be?"

"I have not," said Bras-Rouge, boldly; who had good reasons for telling the lie, inasmuch as the Schoolmaster was at that time confined in one of the caves of his tavern.

"We have some reason to believe that the Schoolmaster has been the perpetrator of a new murder. His capture would be an important one."

"It is now six weeks since any one has seen him."

"We are therefore reproached for losing sight of him."

"There is nothing but reproaches, M. Narcisse—always reproaches!"

"There are not wanting good reasons for the reproaches. And how comes on the smuggling business?"

"I have to be acquainted with all sorts of people—smugglers and the rest of them—in order to give you the information which you desire. I pointed out to you the pipe which was passed through the Barriére du Trone, and introduced into a house in the street, —— for the purpose of introducing liquors into the City."

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one that you denounce, you suffer ten to escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure that you feed from two mangers, as people say."

"Ah! M. Narcisse, I am incapable of so dishonourable a trade."

"And that is not all. There is a woman by the name of Mother Burette, a pawnbrokeress, who is said to be your private receiver."

"What can I do, M. Narcisse? They say so many things—the world is so wicked. I repeat it once more, that I must be intimate with all sorts of people; I even pretend to be guilty of all sorts of crimes, to appear even worse than they are, in order to lull their suspicions; but I confess that it almost breaks my heart to imitate them. I am surprised that any one can doubt my fidelity to the police, when I make such painful sacrifices."

"Poor man! I pity you with all my heart!"

"You may sneer, M. Narcisse; but if the authorities believe what people say, why have they not visited the house of Mother Burette, and my own?"

"You know very well, it is that we might not frighten the bandits, whom for a long time you have promised to surrender."

"And I am going to do it, M. Narcisse. Within one hour, they will be all locked up, and without much trouble, as three of them are women; and as for Nicholas and Barbillon, they are ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as hens."

"Tigers or hens," said Narcisse, opening his coat, and displaying the pistols which protruded from the pockets of his pantaloons, "I am prepared: I have something which will serve them."

"You will do well, however, to take two of your men with you, M. Narcisse. The most cowardly animals will show some spunk, when they are driven into a corner."

"I will place two men in the small room below, by the side of that into which you introduce the brokeress; and at the first signal, I will appear at one door, and my two men at the other."

"You must hurry, for the gang will arrive in a few moments, M. Narcisse."

"Very well; I will place my men, but I hope it will be for some purpose this time."

The conversation was here interrupted by a whistle, the signal agreed upon between Tortillard and Bras-Rouge; for the latter approached the window, to see who was announced.

"Here is Chouette, already. Have you any faith now, M. Narcisse?"

"This is something, but it is not all. Well, well, I will place my men, and we shall see;" and the police-officer disappeared through a side-door.

——

it chinks inside!" said Tortillard, shaking it. "If you will give me, right-away, a couple of sous' worth of hot crumpets, I will go and call papa."

"Have pity on me, and I ——"

Chouette could not finish the sentence. Again all was silent. The young cripple recommenced stamping upon the step of the stairs where he was squatting, accompanying the noise of his feet with the following cries: "Ho, there! no play yet? Up with the curtain, or we will tear it into rags. Go a-head with the play—the performance there—music."

"Now, Chouette, you can no longer stun me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after a few minutes, during which he had evidently managed to gag the old woman. "You now see," he continued, in a hoarse and measured voice, "that I do not wish to put an end to you at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must have a long talk with you, before I kill you. Yes, a long talk. It will be awful to you! Yes, terrible, wretch!"

"Hallo, there! No nonsense, old fellow!" cried Tortillard, partly rising. "Punish her, but don't injure her. When you talk of killing, it is all make believe—is it not? I still cling to my Chouette. I have only lent her to you. You must restore her to me again. Do not make me wretched by destroying my Chouette, or else I will go after father."

"Don't alarm yourself; she is only getting what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the Schoolmaster, desirous of quieting Tortillard, from the fear that he might seek assistance.

"Excellent!—bravo!—the play is about to begin!" exclaimed the son of Bras-Rouge, having no idea that the Schoolmaster would seriously threaten the life of the horrible old woman.

"Now, let us have our talk, Chouette," said the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice. "To begin then: you see, since the dream at the Bouqueval farm, which brought before my eyes all our crimes—since that dream—which has almost made me mad, which will yet make me mad, for in the deep solitude and lonesomeness in which I live, all my thoughts concentrate, in spite of myself, upon this dream—a wonderful change has come over me. Yes, I have looked with horror upon my past wickedness. In the first place, I prevented you from torturing Goualeuse—that was nothing. In chaining me here in this cave, in compelling me to suffer hunger and cold, in delivering me from your tormenting presence, you have left me to most frightful reflections. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone—constantly alone, with a black veil over me, as that unforgiving man called it, who punished me! It is horrible! Observe now: here, in this cave, did I precipitate him, for the purpose of killing him, and this cave is the place of my own punishment—perhaps it will be my tomb. I say again, that it is horrible! All that this man predicted has thus far been realised. He said to me: 'You have abused your strength—you shall tremble before the weakest!' so has it been. He said to me: 'Hereafter, for ever isolated from the external world, you shall be compelled to turn in your thoughts upon yourself, and repent.' That day has arrived; solitude has purified me. I could not have believed it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than heretofore, is, that I experience an infinite joy in thus holding you in my clutches, monster! not to revenge myself, but to revenge our victims. Yes; I shall have fulfilled a duty, when, with my own hands, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice tells me that if you had sooner fallen in my power, much blood—much blood would have been spared, that flowed from our blows. I look now with horror upon the murders I have committed; and yet—does it not appear strange to you?—it is without fear, and with a sense of security, that I am about to commit upon you a most frightful murder, with all its horrible refinements. Speak, speak—can you imagine that?"

"Bravo! well done, old No-Eyes! go it," cried Tortillard, applauding; "how laughable it is!"

"Very laughable," continued the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Now, listen, Chouette; I must finish explaining to you how, by degrees, I have come to repent. The revelation will be odious to your hardened heart, but it will prove to you how implacable should be the vengeance which I am about to visit upon you, in the name of our victims. I must hasten. The delight in having you in my clutches, makes my blood course through my veins—my temples beat with the same violence as when I recall my dream—my mind wanders, perhaps—one of my spells is coming over me—but I shall have time to make your approaching death frightful, by forcing you to hear me."

"Courage, Chouette," cried Tortillard, "courage! Now for the answer. What! don't you know your part? Ask the devil to prompt you, my old woman."

"Oh, it is useless to strike me and bite me," continued the Schoolmaster, after a short silence; "you shall not escape me: you have bitten my finger to the bone, but I will tear out your tongue if you stir. Let us continue our conversation. On finding myself alone in undisturbed silence, and in the darkness of night, I began to experience an excess of furious, powerless rage; for the first time, my head lost its reason. Yes, although awake, my dream returned; you remember the dream?—the little old man of the Rue du Roule—the drowned woman—the cattle dealer; and you hovering over these phantoms. I say to you, it was horrible! I am blind, but my thoughts assumed shapes and figures, constantly representing, in a visible and almost palpable manner, the features of my victims. Even without this frightful dream, my mind, constantly absorbed by the remembrance of my past crimes, would have been troubled with similar visions. Without doubt, when the sight is destroyed, controlling ideas image themselves almost materially in the brain. Sometimes, however, compelled to contemplate them with a resigned terror, these threatening spectres appear to have pity on me; they turn pale, become obscure, and disappear. Then I feel as if awakened from a terrible dream; I feel weak, dejected, and heart-broken; and, would you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, Chouette—I weep! do you hear? I weep.—What! you do not laugh? Laugh, I say, laugh!"

Chouette uttered a low and stifled groan.

"Louder," cried Tortillard; "can't hear."

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I weep because I suffer, and my rage is all in vain. I say to myself: 'To-morrow, the day after, and for ever, I shall be a prey to this same fit of delirium, and to this sad desolation.' What a life, oh! what a life! I had better chosen death, than thus be buried alive in this abyss in which my thoughts are constantly immerged. Blind, solitary, and a prisoner, what can distract me

from my remorse?—nothing, nothing! When the phantoms have ceased to pass and repass before the black veil that covers my eyes, there are other bitter comparisons. I say to myself: 'If I had remained an honest man to this hour, I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honoured by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices.' Alas! the regret at losing happiness through crime, is a first step towards repentance. And when to repentance is joined an expiation of frightful severity — an expiation which changes life into an interminable restlessness, filled with revengeful hallucinations, or desponding reflections—perhaps forgiveness may succeed to that remorse, and to that expiation."

"Take care, old fellow!" cried Tortillard, "you are repeating M. Moëssard's part. It won't do, it won't do."

The Schoolmaster did not listen to the son of Bras-Rouge.

"Does it not astonish you to hear me talk thus, Chouette? If I had continued to remain reckless in the commission of other bloody crimes, or to the savage intoxication of the life of the bagnio, this salutary change, I am well aware, would have never operated upon me. But alone, blind, stung by remorse, what have I to think of? Of new crimes?—how commit them! Of escaping?—how escape! And if I should escape, where should I go? What use should I make of my liberty? No: I must live hereafter in an eternal night, between the anguish of repentance, and the fear of the terrible apparitions by which I am pursued. Sometimes, however, a feeble ray of hope lightens up the darkness which surrounds me; a moment of calm succeeds my torments. Yes, sometimes I am enabled to plot against the spectres that besiege me, by placing in opposition to them the recollections of an honest and peaceable past life —in pointing back to the days of my youth, and of my infancy. Happily, you see, the most wicked enjoy, at least, a few years of peace and innocence, to oppose to those of a criminal and bloody character. We are not born wicked. The most depraved have possessed the amiable ingenuousness of infancy, have known the sweet enjoyments of that lovely age. Again, I repeat to you, there are times when I feel a bitter consolation in reflecting: 'At this hour I am doomed to the execration of all, but the time has been when I was beloved and protected, because I was then innocent and good.' Alas! well may I seek refuge in the past when I can, for it is there alone that I find the least tranquillity."

In pronouncing these last words, the voice of the Schoolmaster had lost its harshness: this ungovernable man appeared to be deeply moved. He continued: "Such has been the salutary influence of these thoughts upon me, that my rage becomes appeased. Courage, strength will fail me to inflict punishment upon you. No, it does not belong to me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old man! You see, Chouette, it was all a joke," said Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it does not belong to me to shed your blood; it would be a murder, excusable, perhaps, but still it would be a murder, and I am haunted by spectres enough already; perhaps, also, the day of your repentance may arrive."

While speaking these words, the Schoolmaster had, in some measure, released Chouette, and given to her some freedom of motion. She profited by it to seize the stiletto, which she had placed in her dress after the murder, and to strike the bandit a violent blow, in order to release herself entirely. He uttered a cry of intense pain. The ferocity of his hatred, rage, and revenge — all his bloody instincts immediately awoke, exasperated by the sudden attack, beneath which his already shaken reason was entirely overthrown.

"Viper! I have felt your tooth!" he exclaimed, in a fearful tone, and seizing Chouette, who had expected to escape, with a still more vigorous grasp: "You have crawled into the cave, but I will bruise your head!" he said, in a still more furious tone. "You were waiting for the appearance of the spectres!—yes, the blood is rushing to my head—my ears ring, my brain reels—they are about to appear!—I am not mistaken. There! there they are! they loom from the darkness of the cave! they approach me with their pale visages, and red, foaming blood! Ha! ha! it frightens you—you shrink—you struggle! but be quiet, you will not see them. I will have pity on you; I will make you blind! —eyeless, like myself!"

The Schoolmaster paused; Chouette howled in such a terrible manner, that Tortillard started from his seat, and stood upright. The screams of Chouette brought to a crisis the frenzied paroxysms of the Schoolmaster.

"Sing!" said he, in a low voice, "sing, Chouette, sing! chaunt your death-song; you are happy; you no longer see the ghosts of those we murdered—the little old man of the Rue du Roule—the drowned woman—the drover; but I see them—they approach!—they touch me!—ha! how cold they are!"

The last ray of intelligence was extinguished in this last frightful howl of the demoniac. From that moment the Schoolmaster reasoned no more, spoke no more; he lashed himself, and roared like a wild beast, surrendered entirely to the savage instinct of blood for blood. But something still more frightful now occurred in the awful darkness of the cave—a repeated stamping and crushing of the feet upon some object, now broke upon the fearful silence. With this noise was mingled a sound like that of a box filled with bones, dashed against a stone with violence; distressing and piercing cries, and infernal bursts of laughter, were the frightful accompaniments of these fear-inspiring blows—a death-gurgle followed, and the awful stillness again resumed its sway — nothing was heard — nothing but the crushing of the feet on bones!

Soon, a distant noise of steps and voices penetrated even to the depths of the cave; brilliant lights danced about in the extremity of the subterranean passage. Tortillard, terrified by the awful scene which had reached his ears, perceived several individuals, bearing torches, descending the stairs rapidly. The cave was almost instantly invaded by several police-officers, at the head of whom was Narcisse Borel, accompanied by municipal guards. Tortillard was seized upon the first steps of the cave, with the basket of Chouette in his hand. Borel, attended by some of his satellites, descended into the cave of the Schoolmaster, and all stopped suddenly, shocked by the horrible sight before them. Chained by the leg, to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, was the Schoolmaster—a frightful monster, with hair on end, and a long beard covering his face, with white foam gushing from his mouth, clothed

with blood-stained rags, lashing himself against the side of the cave, and dashing his fetters like a wild beast in his lair, dragging after him, entangled in the chain, the corpse of Chouette, whose head was frightfully crushed, mutilated, and ground to atoms. A violent struggle could only tear from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice, and enable the guards to place the handcuffs upon his powerful limbs. After a desperate resistance, they succeeded in conveying him to the lower room of Bras-Rouge's tavern—a large, dark room, into which light was admitted by only one window.

Guarded by officers, and with manacles on their hands, Barbillon and Nicholas, with his mother and sister, were discovered. They had been arrested the very moment they were dragging away the brokeress to murder her. The unfortunate woman was gradually recovering her senses in an adjoining apartment. Stretched upon the floor, and restrained with difficulty by the united strength of two police-officers, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded in the arm by Chouette, mad as a demon, roared like a bull beneath the knife of the butcher. At times, a convulsive effort would throw his body from the floor.

Barbillon was seated upon the bench, with his head drooping, his lips colourless, his face livid and lead-like, his eye fixed and ferocious; his long, greasy hair falling upon his blouse, which had been torn in the struggle, and his wrists, bound in iron fetters, lay helpless on his knees. The juvenile appearance of the young reprobate, who was scarcely eighteen years of age, the regularity of his features, the smoothness of a beardless face, already marked with the stamp of crime and degradation, rendered still more deplorable his visage of guilt and debauchery. He opened not his lips. It was difficult to say whether his apparent insensibility was to be attributed to stupidity, or to a cool, determined energy of character. His breathing was hurried, and now and then, with his manacled hands, he wiped away the perspiration from his pale forehead.

Calebasse was seated by his side; her cap torn from her head in the struggle, displayed her yellow hair, tied behind her head with a string, and falling down in thin and tangled locks. More enraged than despondent, with her jaundiced face slightly flushed, she cast glances of disdain and contempt upon the cowed and disconsolate Nicholas, who was seated upon a chair opposite to her.

The bandit, foreseeing the doom which awaited him, with his body bent, and his head inclined, and his shaking knees striking together, seemed completely overpowered with terror. His teeth gnashed together convulsively, and deep groans expressed the anguish of his guilty mind.

The Mother Martial, the widow of the guillotined man, stood alone, leaning against the wall, and had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head raised, she cast around her an undaunted look: the brazen mask of her face betrayed no emotion. At the sight of Bras-Rouge, however, who was conveyed to this room, after having attended to the minute search of the house which the commissary and his clerk had instituted, the features of the widow, in spite of her inflexible calmness, contracted themselves. Her small and glassy eye flashed like an enraged viper; her lips, pressed together, became of a more ashy hue; she stretched out her manacled arms; and then, as if she had regretted this manifestation of powerless rage, she subdued her emotion, and immediately resumed her impassible calmness.

While the commissary was making a memorandum of the arrest, assisted by his clerk, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands together, threw a complacent look upon his formidable prisoners, the capture of whom had delivered Paris from a gang of most dangerous criminals. But, acknowledging how useful an auxiliary Bras-Rouge had been, he could not restiain a grateful and expressive glance.

The father of Tortillard was to share, until after their trial, the prison of those he had denounced. Like them, he had fetters upon his hands, and he appeared to be more terrified than either of his accomplices, grimacing and puckering his weasel face into an expression of the most mournful despair, and uttering lugubrious sighs. He kissed Tortillard, as if he sought consolation in those paternal caresses. The young cripple seemed vastly indifferent to these demonstrations of fatherly tenderness, for he had just learned that he would be committed, for a season, to the prison for young delinquents.

"What a misfortune to be compelled to leave my dear little son!" exclaimed Bras-Rouge, affecting grief. "We are more miserable than the rest, Mother Martial, for we are torn from our children."

The widow could no longer retain her *sang froid;* not doubting in the least the treachery which she had predicted, she exclaimed: "I was very sure that you had sold my son, who is at Toulon. Take that, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You have sold our heads! Never mind; they will see a glorious death—the death of true Martials!"

"Yes; we are not afraid of death," added Calebasse, with savage exultation.

The widow, indicating Nicholas, with a glance of overpowering contempt, said to her daughter: "That coward will disgrace his family on the scaffold."

A few moments afterwards, the widow and Calebasse, accompanied by two officers, were entering a coach, in order to be transported to Saint-Lazare. Bras-Rouge, Barbillon, and Nicholas, were conveyed to La Force. The Schoolmaster was committed to Conciergerie, where were cells destined for those criminals who were temporarily deranged.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INTRODUCTION.

A FEW days after the death of Madame Seraphin, the murder of Chouette, and the arrest of the gang of malefactors at the cabaret of Bras-Rouge, Rodolph went to the house in the Rue du Temple.

As we have already said, Rodolph had determined to bring cunning to bear against the cunning of Jacques Ferrand, in order to discover his crimes, to oblige him to make reparation, and inflict a terrible vengeance upon him, if the audacity and hypocrisy of the man should succeed in setting at defiance the law. To effect this purpose, Rodolph had ordered to be released from Germany, the intriguing *metisse*, the unworthy wife of the negro David. That creature, as beautiful as she was perverse, as enchanting as she was dangerous, had arrived on the previous day, and had received the minutest instructions from

the Baron de Graün. In his last conversation with Madame Pipelet, Rodolph had suggested to her the design of supplying in Jacques Ferrand's family, the situation which Louise had formerly occupied, by Cecily. The portress had acted conformably to her promise, and Madame Seraphin had received her overtures with pleasure, and agreed to address herself to the notary on the subject; which she actually did, in terms the most favourable to Cecily, the very morning of the day the housekeeper had been drowned near the Island of the Ravageur. Rodolph had now waited upon Madame Pipelet, to learn the result of Cecily's introduction. To his great astonishment, upon entering the lodge, he found, although it was eleven o'clock in the morning, M. Pipelet in bed, and Anastasie standing near, and offering him a beverage. Alfred, whose brows were hid beneath a formidable cotton nightcap, gave no answer to Anastasie, and she concluded that he was asleep. She closed the curtains of the bed, and turning round, perceived Rodolph. According to her usage, she raised the back of her left hand to her periwig, and gave the military salute.

"Your servant, my king of tenants. You find me in great trouble *extenuated*. There are queer goings on in the house, to say nothing of Alfred's being confined to his bed, yesterday."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Can you ask such a question?"

"How?"

"Always the same thing. The monster is more furious than ever after Alfred: he makes a perfect simpleton of him. I do not know what to do with him."

"Cabrion again?"

"Yes, again."

"He must be the devil!"

"I must believe so myself, M. Rodolph; for this villain always knows the moments when I am absent. My heels are hardly turned, when —puff!—he is on the back of my old beloved, who can't defend himself any more than a child. Even yesterday, while I was gone to M. Ferrand's, the notary—there is news there, also ——"

"And Cecily?" said Rodolph, quickly. "I came to know ——"

"Hear, my king of tenants; don't interrupt me. I have a thousand things to tell you; but I shall lose myself, if you break in upon me with your questions."

"Proceed. I will listen to you."

"In the first place, just think, that yesterday they came to arrest Mother Burette."

"What! the pawnbrokeress, on the third floor?"

"The same. She had a great many funny trades, besides lending money. She was, in the bargain, a receiver, a smelter of metals, a thief: in short, she was everything that is bad. The worst of it is, that her old lover, M. Bras-Rouge, our landlord, is also arrested. I tell you, there are great goings on in this house!"

"What! Is Bras-Rouge arrested?"

"Yes; in his cabaret, on the Champs Elysées. They have *jugged* that wicked cripple of a Tortillard also. They say that ever so many murders have taken place in his house; that there was a gang of brigands there; Chouette, one of Mother Burette's friends, had been strangled; and, that if the officers had not interfered in time, Mother Mathieu would have been murdered, the brokeress who employed poor Morel. Do you see how much news I have?"

"Bras-Rouge arrested, and Chouette dead!" said Rodolph to himself, with astonishment. "The horrible old woman has deserved her fate, and poor Fleur-de-Marie is avenged."

"Now, as for what concerns this house, not excepting even the new infamy of Cabrion. I will finish that brigand at once. You shall hear of his impudence. After Mother Burette was arrested, and we had heard of Bras-Rouge's also, I told my old beloved: 'You must trot away to the proprietor of this house, and tell him that Bras-Rouge is caged.' Alfred starts. After two hours, he came back, but in such a condition! such a condition! pale as a sheet, and blowing like a porpoise!"

"What was the matter with him?"

"You will see soon, M. Rodolph. Only think, that about two steps from here, there is a high white wall. My old beloved, in leaving the house, happened to look upon that wall, and what do you suppose he saw, in large charcoal letters, thereon? 'Pipelet—Cabrion,' united by a monstrous hyphen. It is the union of his name to that rascal, which makes him sick at the stomach. That nearly upset him; but as he went a step further, what do you think he saw on the great gate of the Temple? 'Pipelet—Cabrion,' always with a hyphen. He keeps on going, and at every step he sees those cursed words written on the fences, the walls, and the houses, everywhere, 'Pipelet — Cabrion.' My old beloved began to see thirty-six candles, and he thought that every person stared at him. He was so much ashamed, that he pulled his hat over his nose. He went to the Boulevard, thinking that the villain had confined his vile jokes to the Rue du Temple. But it was not so. All along the Boulevard, wherever there was a place to write, he saw, 'Pipelet—Cabrion.' Finally, the poor old soul arrived at the house of the proprietor, so completely upset, that after having stammered away for half-an-hour in his ears, the man did not understand a word of what Alfred went to tell him. He sent him away, calling him an old fool, and told him to send me to make the explanation. Alfred returned by another street, in order to avoid the names which he had seen written on the walls; but it was of no use."

"What! 'Pipelet—Cabrion,' again?"

"Just as you say, my king of tenants; so that the poor, dear man, arrived here in great distress of mind, and determines to go into exile. He related to me the new devilry. I calmed him as much as I could, and started with Mademoiselle Cecily, to go to the notary's house, before visiting the proprietor. Do you think that is all? No, indeed! I had hardly turned my back, when that Cabrion, who had been watching for my departure, had the impudence to send here two big she-devils, who attacked Alfred! My hair stands on end! I will tell you about it by-and-by, but let us finish with the notary first. I started in the carriage with Mademoiselle Cecily, as you recommended to me. She wore the costume of a German peasant, when she arrived here, and had not time enough to have any other dresses made, as I was to tell M. Ferrand. You may believe me, if you please, my king of tenants, I have seen many pretty girls—I saw myself in the springtime of my life—but never did I see, including myself, a young girl who could approach within a hundred leagues of Cecily. She has, particularly in the blink of her large, roguish black eyes, something—something—I don't know what it is; but it strikes right into one. What eyes! what

eyes! In short, although Alfred is not very susceptible, the first time that he saw her, he turned as red as a beet-root, and nothing could tempt him to look at her a second time. For an hour he wriggled about on his chair, as if he was sitting on nettles. He told me afterwards, that he couldn't understand it, but that the look of Cecily brought to his mind all the stories of that impudent Bradamanti, about those savage women, which made him blush so much."

"But the notary! the notary!"

"I have come to him now, M. Rodolph. It was about seven o'clock in the evening, when we arrived at the house of M. Ferrand. I told the porter to inform his master that Madame Pipelet had arrived, with a servant of whom Madame Seraphin had spoken, and whom she wished to see at the house. Thereupon, the porter sighed, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Madame Seraphin. I said: 'No.' Ah! M. Rodolph, there is more goings on."

"What then?"

"Madame Seraphin was drowned, while taking a country excursion with one of her relatives."

"Drowned on a country excursion in the winter!" exclaimed Rodolph, with surprise.

"Yes, M. Rodolph, she is indeed drowned. As for myself, it causes me more surprise than sadness; for since the misfortune of that poor Louise, whom she denounced, I have always hated that Seraphin. Therefore, I said to myself: 'If she is drowned, I shan't die for it:' that's my disposition."

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter told me at first, that he thought I should not be able to see his master, and he asked me to wait a moment in his lodge; but after a second, he returned for me, and we crossed the yard and entered a room on the lower floor. There was a poor, miserable candle in the room, and the notary was seated in the corner of the fire-place, where the remnants of coal were smoking. What a miserable hole! I had never seen M. Ferrand before. Good God! how ugly he is! He might offer me the throne of Araby to play tricks with him, but 'twould all be in vain."

"And was the notary struck with the beauty of Cecily?"

"How could I tell, when the glasses were over his eyes! What can an old deacon like him, know about women? However, when we entered, he rather started upon his chair, probably from surprise at the Alsatian costume of Cecily, for she looked like one of those broom-girls, only a million times better, with her short petticoats and pretty legs, with blue and red stockings on them. My eyes! what a calf! and her ancles so fine! and with such a dear little foot! in short, the notary seemed quite upset."

"It was probably this singular costume of Cecily, which made the impression."

"I must believe so; but the ticklish moment was coming. Fortunately, I remembered the maxim you gave me, which was of great service to me."

"What maxim?"

"'What you wish for, you must not appear to wish for, and that which you do not wish for, you must appear to wish for.' Then I said to myself: 'My king of tenants must get rid of this German woman by placing her with the master of Louise; push ahead! I have got a story to tell;' so I said to the notary, not giving him time to breathe: 'Pardon me, sir, if my niece comes dressed in the fashion of her country; but she has just arrived, and she has no clothes but those which she has on, and I have no money with which to purchase her any others; besides, it would not be worth while to do so, for we have only come to thank you for telling Madame Seraphin that you consented to see Cecily, after the good testimonials which I gave respecting her: but I fear she will not suit you, sir.'"

"Well done, Madame Pipelet," exclaimed Rodolph.

"'Why will not your niece suit me?' said the notary, who had again seated himself by the fire, and seemed to look at us over his glasses."

"'Because Cecily is homesick, sir; she has only been here three days, and she wishes to return, although she had to beg her way and sell little brooms, according to the custom among her country-women.'"

"'And will you, who are her relative, suffer that?'

"'I am her relative, it is true, but she is an orphan girl, twenty years old, and the mistress of her own actions.'"

"'Pshaw! the mistress of her actions at that age! A girl at that age should obey her relations,' said the notary, roughly; and thereupon, Cecily began to cry and tremble, snugging up to me close, frightened probably at the notary."

"And what did Jacques Ferrand do?"

"He continued grumbling, saying: 'If you abandon a girl of that age, you will ruin her. She return to Germany, begging! fine resource; and what an aunt you would be, to permit such a thing.'"

"'Bravo, bravo!' said I to myself; 'I've got you, old kangaroo; Cecily shall stay in your house, as true as my name is Pipelet. 'I am her aunt, it is true,' I replied, in a complaining tone, 'and it's a burdensome relationship for me; I have enough upon my hands without her: I prefer that my niece should take service, than be an expense to me. The devil take those parents, who send a large girl like that, without giving her any money.' At these words, Cecily, who played her part well, burst into tears; thereupon, the notary, in a grave, hollow voice, like a preacher, began to say: 'You will have to give an account to God, for the trust which He has committed to your hands. It would be a crime to expose that young girl to perdition. I am willing to assist you in this charitable work, if your niece will promise me to be laborious, honest, and pious, and above all, not run into the streets; I will take compassion on her, and admit her into my service.' 'Oh, no! no! I had rather go back home,' said Cecily, crying."

"Her dangerous mendacity has not failed her," thought Rodolph; "the diabolical creature has fully comprehended the orders of the Baron de Graün." And the prince added, aloud: "Did M. Ferrand appear displeased at the disinclination of Cecily?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph; he grumbled between his teeth, and said to her, in a surly tone: 'It's no matter what you like or dislike; the question is, which course is the most becoming, the most proper. God will not forsake you, if you lead an upright life, and fulfil your religious obligations. You will remain in a habitation that is perfectly holy, and if your aunt really loves you, she will accept my offer. You will have small wages at first, but if, by your good conduct, you shall deserve higher, I will afterwards increase it,

perhaps.' 'Good!' I exclaimed to myself; 'you are in for it, M. Notary; Cecily is sure of roosting in your house, old stingy, heartless son of a gun! That Seraphin was many years in your service, and you don't look as if you knew that she was drowned the day before yesterday.' And I added, aloud: 'To be sure, sir, the situation is a very good one, but, if this young girl is homesick——' 'She will get over it,' replied the notary; 'come, decide. Do you say yes or no? If you accept, bring your niece to-morrow night at this hour, and I will admit her at once into my service. My porter will inform her what we shall expect her to do. As for her wages, I will give her, at first, twenty francs a month and her board.' 'Won't you give her twenty-five francs, sir?' 'No; if she satisfies me, I will think about it by-and-by. But I must inform you that your niece must not be running out, nor have people calling to visit her.' 'Who do you suppose would come to see her?' said I; 'she knows no one but myself in Paris, and I have to attend to my door. It has put me all out of sorts to be compelled to accompany here; you will not see me again, sir. She will be as much a stranger to me as if she had never left Germany. As for her running out, there is a very simple means of preventing that: let her continue to wear the costume of her country, and she won't dare to venture into the street.' 'You are right,' said the notary to me; 'besides, it is honourable to have an attachment to our national costume; she will, therefore, continue to dress as an Alsatian.' 'Come,' said I, to Cecily, who, with her head down, was still crying, 'you must decide, my girl: a good place in an honest house, is not found every day; and besides, if you refuse, you may look out for yourself, for I shan't trouble myself about you.' Thereupon, Cecily said, crying and sobbing, that she would consent to remain, on condition that, if, within a fortnight, she did not become more contented, she should be permitted to go home.' 'I do not wish to keep you by force,' said the notary; 'I shall have no trouble to find servants. Here is money to bind the bargain; and all that your aunt will have to do, is to return with you to-morrow night.' Cecily had not ceased crying. I took the old stingy devil's fee of forty sous, and we returned here together."

"Well done! Madame Pipelet. I have not forgotten my promise: take the reward I agreed to give you, if you succeeded in securing employment for that poor girl, who embarrassed me."

"Wait until to-morrow, my king of tenants," said Madame Pipelet, refusing the money of Rodolph; "for after all, M. Ferrand might change his mind, when I take Cecily to him to-night."

"I do not think that he will change his mind. But where is Cecily?"

"In the room that adjoins the apartment of the commandant; she does not stir from it, as you ordered, and appears as resigned as a young lamb, although she has such eyes! such eyes! But, speaking of the commandant, isn't he an intriguing chap! When he came here to superintend the removal of his furniture, he told me that, if there were any letters brought here for Madame Vincent, they were intended for him, and to forward them to his house, No. 5, Rue Mondovi. That fine bird has assumed the name of a female—isn't he a cunning one? But that is not all: did he not have the impudence to ask me what had become of his wood? 'Your wood! why don't you speak of your forest at once?' I replied. Pshaw! two wretched loads of wood, not worth a sou, one of them of floated wood, and the other green; for the pinchpenny didn't buy good wood. What airs he put on about it! His wood! 'I burned your wood,' I said to him, 'to preserve your furniture from dampness. If I had not done it, mushrooms would have grown upon your head-gear and your firefly dressing-gown, which you put on often enough for no purpose, while waiting for the little lady who was making a joke of you.'"

A deep and plaintive groan from the couch of Alfred, interrupted Madame Pipelet. "The old darling is sighing; he is going to wake up. Will you excuse me, my king of tenants?"

"Certainly; I have some further inquiries to put to you."

"Well, old beloved, how do you feel now?" asked Madame Pipelet, opening the curtains. "Here is M. Rodolph, who knows the new infamy of Cabrion, and pities you from the bottom of his soul."

"Ah, sir!" said Alfred, turning in a languishing manner towards Rodolph, "I shall never recover from this last shock; the monster has reached my heart. I am the sole topic of conversation in the capital; my name is read on all the walls of Paris, united to the name of that reprobate, 'Pipelet—Cabrion,' with an enormous hyphen—a hyphen, sir! I, sir, joined to that infamous blackguard, in the face of the metropolis of Europe!"

"M. Rodolph is acquainted with that, but does not know about your adventures last evening, with those big she-devils."

"Alas! sir, he reserved the masterpiece of infamy for the last; it went beyond all limits," said Alfred, in a lugubrious tone.

"Relate to me, M. Pipelet, your new misfortune."

"All that he has done is nothing, compared with this last atrocity; he has accomplished his object, thanks to his infamous perseverance. I do not know whether I have strength enough to relate the adventure. Modesty and confusion will choke my utterance."

M. Pipelet, with a great effort, assumed a sitting posture, drew his woollen shirt over his breast, and commenced in these words: "My spouse had just left. Absorbed in reflection at the new defamation of my name, written on the walls of the capital, I sought for some distraction from painful reflections, by putting a new sole upon a boot, which I had for twenty times taken up and abandoned, owing to the obstinate persecutions of my tormentor. I was seated before the table when I discovered that the door of my lodge was opened, and a woman entered. She was wrapped up in a cloak, with a hood to it, which came over her head. I arose politely from my seat, and touched my hat with my hand. At that moment, a second woman, wrapped up in the same manner, entered my lodge, and locked the door upon the inside. Although I was astonished at the familiarity of this proceeding, and the silence of the two women, I again arose from my chair, and touched my hat a second time. Then, sir, then sir—I never can proceed, sir, my modesty revolts."

"Come, go ahead, you old male prude! we are all men here: go on with your story," said Madame Pipelet.

"Then," continued Alfred, blushing up to his eyes, "their cloaks suddenly fell, and what did I behold! a couple of sirens or nymphs, with no

other garment but a tunic of ivy, with their heads crowned with leaves. I was petrified. Both of the creatures advanced towards me, stretching out their arms, as if to seduce me to their embrace."*

"The jades! the jades!" said Anastasie.

"The advances of these immodest women shocked me," continued Alfred, animated with chaste indignation; "and according to that habit which never abandons me in critical epochs of my life, I remained immoveable upon my chair. Taking advantage of my surprise, the two sirens moved forward towards me, in a sort of dance, balancing themselves with their legs and arms. I become more and more immoveable—they touch me—they clasp me in their arms."

"What impudent jades! to clasp in their arms a married man of your age! If I had been there with my broomstick," exclaimed Anastasie, "I would have made the nymphs cut a pigeon-wing, I can tell you!"

"When I felt their arms around me, my blood rushed to my heart, my strength failed me, and I fainted. Then the most impudent of the sirens, a tall blonde, bent over my shoulders, and snatched away my hat, and left my head bare; keeping up her incessant dancing pace, and balancing her arms, and pirouetting. Her accomplice then drew from her foliage a pair of scissors, and gathered into a knot all the hair upon the back part of my head, and cut off the whole of it—the whole of it, sir—keeping up her pigeon-wings, and said, in a measured tone: 'It is for Cabrion, for Cabrion, Cab—ri—on!' and the other impudent jade repeated the song, 'Tis for Cabrion, for Cab—ri—on!'"

After a pause, and a distressing sigh, Alfred continued: "During this infamous violation, I raised my eyes, and I saw, smack against the window of the lodge, the infernal face of Cabrion, with his beard and pointed hat: the hideous rascal was laughing and grinning over my torments. To escape from the odious vision, I closed my eyes; and when I re-opened them, all had disappeared, and I found myself upon my chair, with my head uncovered, and completely shorn of its honours. You see, sir, that Cabrion, by dint of cunning, obstinate, and unheard-of audacity, has reached his infamous aim; but what horrible instruments has he employed! His design was, to make me pass for his friend; and he commenced by sticking up a sign over my door, informing the public that we carried on a trade of friendship together. Not satisfied with that, my name is at this moment joined, by an enormous hyphen to his own, on all the walls of the capital: there is not an inhabitant of Paris that can have any doubt of my intimacy with that reprobate. He wished also for a lock of my hair, and he has got it—yes! the whole of it—by means of the shameless sirens he employed. Now, you see, sir, that nothing is before me but to exile myself from France—my glorious France—where I had always hoped to find a home and a grave!" and Alfred fell back upon his bed, and clasped his hands.

"On the contrary, my old beloved, now that he has got your hair, he will torment you no more," said Anastasie, soothingly.

"Torment me no more!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, with a convulsive shudder. "You do not know him: his hostility is insatiable. Who can tell what he will next want of me?"

* Two dancing girls of the theatre Port Saint-Martin, acquaintances of Cabrion, dressed in their ballet costume.

The appearance of Rigolette at the entrance of the lodge, now terminated the lamentations of M. Pipelet.

"Do not come in, mademoiselle," said M. Pipelet, faithful to his sense of decorum; "I am in bed and undressed." And saying this, he drew the coverlet up to his chin, and the grisette halted discreetly upon the threshold.

"I was just going to see you, my neighbour," said Rodolph. "Be kind enough to wait a moment for me." And addressing Anastasie, he added: "Do not forget to take Cecily to M. Ferrand's this evening."

"Rest contented, my king of tenants. At seven o'clock, she shall be installed: and as the wife of Morel can get about, I will ask her to keep my lodge; for Alfred would not remain alone for an empire."

The rose faded more and more from the cheeks of Rigolette. Her charming face lost its round and fresh appearance, and her piquant expression, usually so lively and animated, had become even more serious than it was when she met Fleur-de-Marie coming from the prison of Saint-Lazare.

"How delighted I am to see you, my neighbour!" said Rigolette to Rodolph, after he had left the lodge of M. Pipelet. "I have a thousand things to tell you."

"In the first place, my neighbour, how do you do? Let me look into your pretty face. Is it as rosy and lively as ever? Alas! no. I find you pale, and I fear that you work too much."

"No, no, M. Rodolph; I assure you that I have accustomed myself to my slight increase of labour. Nothing but sorrow changes my appearance. Every time I see that poor Germain, I become more and more sad."

"Is he, then, very melancholy?"

"More so than ever, M. Rodolph; and all my attempts to console him are counteracted. I am unfortunate." And tears moistened the large black eyes of the grisette.

"Explain yourself, my neighbour."

"Yesterday, for instance, I went to see him, and took with me a book which we read in the happy days of our intimacy, and at the sight of it he melted into tears. It did not surprise me: it was quite natural; for the contrast between his recollection of the evenings which he spent in my pretty little room, by the side of my stove, and the frightful life which he is compelled to lead in prison, was perfectly overpowering. Poor Germain! his fate is a sad one!"

"Cheer up," said Rodolph to the young girl. "When Germain is released from prison, and his innocence established, he will be restored to his mother and friends, and in their society and yours, he will forget these moments of severe trial."

"Yes, but in the meantime, M. Rodolph, he will be tormented still more: and, besides, this is not all."

"Well, what more is there?"

"As he is the only honest man among those bandits, they hate him, because he cannot possibly associate with them. The keeper of the prison, who is a very excellent man, requested me to persuade Germain to exhibit less pride, and to try to make himself more familiar with those wicked fellows; but he cannot do it, and I fear that some day they will do him a serious injury." Then, suddenly interrupting herself, and wiping her tearful eyes, Rigolette continued: "Only see! here I have been thinking of myself

[Scene in the Kitchen of the House of the Ravageur.]

alone, and have forgotten to say a word to you about Goualeuse."

"About Goualeuse!" said Rodolph, with surprise.

"The day before yesterday, when I was going to visit Louise at Saint-Lazare, I met her."

"You met Goualeuse?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph."

"At Saint-Lazare?"

"She was just coming out of there with an old lady."

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Rodolph, stupefied.

"I assure you it was her, neighbour."

"You must have been mistaken."

"No, no. Notwithstanding her being dressed like a peasant girl, I knew her instantly. She is still very pretty, although pale. She retains the melancholy smile and sad look which she formerly had."

"Then she has visited Paris without my knowledge. I cannot believe it. Why had she been to Saint-Lazare?"

"I suppose, like myself, she went to see some prisoner. I had not time to question her particularly; the old lady who was with her looked so cross, and appeared to be in such a hurry. But, M. Rodolph, then you know Goualeuse?"

"Certainly, I do."

"Then I am convinced it was you of whom she spoke to me."

"Of me?"

"Yes, neighbour."

"You must know, that I was relating to her the misfortunes of Louise and Germain, both so good and so honest, and so shamefully persecuted by that villain Jacques Ferrand; but I was very careful not to tell her that you took an interest in them. Then Goualeuse said, that if a generous person of her acquaintance only knew the

unhappy and unmerited fate of my poor prisoners, he would certainly come to their assistance. I asked her what was the name of that person, and she mentioned your name, M. Rodolph."

"It is her—it must be her."

"You must suppose that we were both much astonished at the discovery, or at the resemblance of names. We therefore promised each other to write whether our Rodolphs were the same, and it seems that you are the one, neighbour."

"Yes, I have taken an interest in that poor child; but what you say about her presence in Paris so much surprises me, that if you had not given me so many details of your interview with her, I should have persisted in believing that you were mistaken. But farewell, neighbour; what you have just informed me about Goualeuse, compels me to leave you. Continue to remain silent before Louise and Germain, concerning the protection which they may expect when the proper moment has arrived. Such silence is more important than ever. By the way, how are the Morels?"

"Better and better, M. Rodolph: the mother has entirely recovered; the children's health is improving very fast; the whole family owe their life and happiness to you—so generous have you been to them. But poor Morel, how is he?"

"Better. I have heard from him at times; he appears to have some lucid moments, and there is reason to hope that he will be cured of his insanity. Have courage, my neighbour, and all will soon be right. Have you need of anything? Do the profits of your labour supply all your wants?"

"Oh, yes, M. Rodolph. It is true, I am compelled to encroach a little upon my night's rest; but it is of no importance—I get very little sleep."

"Alas! my poor neighbour, I fear that *Father Cretu* and *Ramonette* will sing but little, since they wait for you to begin."

"You do not deceive yourself, M. Rodolph; neither myself nor my birds sing now. Good heavens! no; but you must not laugh, when I tell you that they appear to observe that I am sad. Instead of chirping as they formerly did, when I entered the room, they utter a warbling so sweet and so plaintive, that it seems as if they wished to console me. But how nonsensical it is for me to think so; is it not, M. Rodolph?"

"By no means; for I am sure that such good friends as your birds, sympathize too closely with you not to be alive to your grief."

"Yes, it is true, the little creatures are very intelligent," said Rigolette, innocently; happy in being convinced of the sagacity of the feathered companions of her solitude.

"Nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. But farewell, my neighbour; before long, I hope your beautiful eyes will sparkle, and your cheeks be as rosy as formerly; and you will sing so cheerfully, that *Father Cretu* and *Ramonette* will have difficulty in bearing their burden of the chorus."

"Are you really sincere, M. Rodolph?" asked Rigolette, with a deep-drawn sigh. "Well, farewell, my neighbour."

"Farewell for a short time."

* * *

Rodolph could not understand why Madame Georges, without notifying him, had allowed Fleur-de-Marie to come to Paris; he therefore immediately returned to his residence, for the purpose of dispatching an express to Bouqueval farm. At the moment he entered the Rue Plumet, he saw a post-coach drawn up before the door of the hotel. It was Murphy, who had returned from Normandy. He had gone there for the purpose of unmasking the sinister designs of the Countess d'Orbigny, and of Brademanti, her accomplice.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MURPHY AND POLIDORI.

THE face of Sir Walter Murphy was radiant with joy; and on descending from the carriage, he gave to one of the attendants of the prince a brace of pistols, and throwing aside his long riding-coat, without waiting to change his garments, he followed Rodolph, who impatiently preceded him, to his apartment.

"Good news, my lord, good news," eagerly exclaimed the squire, when he found himself alone with Rodolph. "The wretches are unmasked—the Count d'Orbigny is saved; you sent me at the very moment—in one hour later, a new crime would have been committed."

"How is the Marquise d'Harville?"

"She is all joy at the restoration of her father's affection, and all happiness in having arrived in conformity to your advice, in sufficient time to rescue him from inevitable death."

"And what have you to say of Polidori?"

"He was again the worthy accomplice of the marquise's stepmother. But what an infamous woman is she! what coolness, what audacity! And as for that Polidori, alas! my lord, you have sometimes been so condescending as to thank me for what you have called the proofs of my devotion——"

"I have always denominated them proofs of friendship, my good Murphy."

"True, my lord; but this friendship has never been put to such severe tests, as of late," said Murphy, in a half-jesting spirit.

"What do you mean?"

"The disguise of a coalheaver, the peregrinations in the City, were nothing, absolutely nothing, my lord, in comparison with the trip I have just completed with this infernal wretch, Polidori."

"What do you say? Polidori!"

"I have brought him with me."

"With you?"

"With me. What a companion! During twelve hours, to be chained to the side of the man I hate beyond all mortals. I would rather travel with a viper or the beast which I hold in the greatest antipathy."

"Where is Polidori now?"

"In the house of the Allée des Veuves, securely guarded."

"Has he then made no resistance, for the purpose of saving himself?"

"None. I left him the choice of either being arrested by the French authorities, or conducted as my prisoner to the Allée des Veuves. He did not hesitate."

"You were right; it is much better to have him in our own hands. You are a perfect treasure, my old Murphy. But detail to me the incidents of your trip; I am anxious to know how this unworthy woman and her infamous accomplice were finally unmasked."

"Nothing was more simple; I had only to follow your instructions to the letter, in order to terrify and overwhelm those wretches. In this affair, my lord, you have, as you ever do, saved

the worthy, and chastised the wicked—the noble protector that you are!"

"Sir Walter, Sir Walter! do you remember the Baron de Graün's flatteries?" said Rodolph, with a smile.

"Be it so, my lord; I will commence. But perhaps you would first prefer to read this letter of the Marquise d'Harville, which will inform you of all that transpired before my arrival dismayed Polidori."

"A letter! give it to me quickly."

Murphy, placing the letter of the marquise in the hands of Rodolph, added: "As it was the most convenient, instead of accompanying the marquise to her father's, I went to the tavern, a few steps from the chateau, and waited until the marquise should command my services."

Rodolph perused what follows with tender and anxious solicitude:—

"My lord,—In addition to all your other claims upon my gratitude, I am now indebted to you for the life of my father. I hasten to relate the facts; they will express to you the additional treasures of thankfulness towards you, which have accumulated in my heart. Impressed with the importance of the advice you communicated to me, through Sir Walter Murphy, who joined me on the road to Normandy, I hastened my journey to the chateau of Aubiers. I do not know why, but the features of the servants who received me appeared ominous. I saw among them none of the ancient domestics of our house; no one knew me, no one recognised me. I was obliged to announce myself; and I learned that for a few hours previously, my father had suffered severely, and that my stepmother had brought to his relief, a physician from Paris. I had no doubt that it was Polidori. Desirous of being immediately conducted to my father, I inquired for the old *valet de chambre*, to whom he was greatly attached, and I learned that the servant had been for some time discharged. This information was given me by the steward, who conducted me to my apartment, saying that he would inform my stepmother of my arrival. Was this an illusion? a presentiment? for it seemed to me that my arrival was troublesome to my father's servants. Everything in the chateau appeared to me sad and ominous. In the disposition of mind in which I found myself, I sought to draw inferences from the most insignificant circumstances. I remarked every indication of carelessness and disorder, as if it was regarded as superfluous to arrange a habitation which was so soon to be abandoned. My alarm and anguish increased every instant. After having established my daughter and her governess in my own apartment, I was about to seek my father, when my stepmother entered. Notwithstanding her powers of dissimulation and self-control, she appeared confused at my sudden arrival. 'The count did not expect a visit from you,' said she; 'he is so low, that such a surprise might prove fatal. I have, therefore, thought it proper to leave him in ignorance of your arrival. He would be unable to understand it, and——' I did not allow her to conclude the sentence. 'A great misfortune has occurred, madame,' said I; 'the Marquis d'Harville is dead—a victim of a fatal imprudence. After such a melancholy event, I could no longer remain in my residence at Paris, and I am come to pass with my father the first days of my mourning.' 'You are a widow? that is a provoking piece of good fortune!' said my enraged stepmother. After being made acquainted with the marriage into which the revengeful nature of this woman drew me, you will understand, my lord, the atrocity of this exclamation. 'It is for the purpose of averting a similar piece of good fortune from yourself, madame, that I have visited this chateau,' said I, imprudently. 'I wish to see my father.' 'At present, that is impossible,' said she, turning pale; 'the sight of you might produce a dangerous relapse.' 'Since my father is so seriously ill,' I exclaimed, 'why was not I informed of it?' 'The Count d'Orbigny did not desire it.' 'I do not believe you, madame; and I shall immediately go to him, for the purpose of ascertaining the truth,' said I, advancing towards the door of my father's apartment. 'I repeat to you, that your unexpected appearance might be productive of terrible consequences,' said she, placing herself before me, in order to oppose my passage. 'I cannot permit you to enter his apartment, until I have first informed him of your arrival, with all the precaution which his situation demands.' I was placed in a cruel perplexity, my lord. A sudden surprise might actually have been very dangerous to my father; but that woman, usually so calm, so collected, appeared to be so much frightened by my presence; I had so many reasons for doubting the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity; and, finally, the presence of Doctor Polidori, the murderer of my mother, caused me so much alarm, that, thinking the life of my father was in jeopardy, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him, and the fear of exciting dangerous emotions. 'I must instantly see my father!' said I to my stepmother; and, although she had seized my arm, I passed on. The woman, losing her temper, again attempted forcibly to prevent my leaving the room. Her astonishing resistance redoubled my fears. I released myself from her grasp; knowing where my father's apartment was, I ran to it in haste, and entered it. Oh, my lord! never in my life shall I forget the scene that was presented to my sight. I could scarcely recognise my father! pale, thin, and suffering delineated upon every feature, with his head resting upon a pillow, he was reclining in an easy chair. At the corner of the fireplace, standing near him, was Doctor Polidori, who was in the act of pouring into a cup, held by a nurse, a few drops of liquid, contained in a small crystal flacon, which he had in his hand. His long, red beard gave to his countenance a most forbidding expression. I entered the room with such precipitation, that the doctor made a movement of surprise, exchanged a significant look with my stepmother, who was hastily following me, and, instead of giving to my father the potion which he had prepared for him, he quickly placed the flacon upon the mantelpiece. Guided by an unaccountable instinct, my first movement was to seize the flacon. Observing the surprise and alarm of both my stepmother and Polidori, I congratulated myself upon my presence of mind. My stepmother was stupefied, and seemed angry at my presence. I expected it. Polidori cast upon me a ferocious look; and, notwithstanding the presence of my father, and that of the nurse, I feared that the miserable wretch, seeing that his crime was almost discovered, would resort to extremities against me. Feeling the necessity of some assistance in such an important moment, I rang the bell; and when one of my father's servants made his appearance, I

requested him to command my valet, who had already been instructed, to bring some articles which I had left at the tavern. Sir Walter Murphy knew, that in order not to awaken the suspicions of my stepmother, in case I should be obliged to give my orders in her presence, that I would resort to that subterfuge to secure his presence. The surprise of my father and stepmother was such, that the servant had time to leave the room before they could open their lips. I felt less anxious, knowing that Sir Walter Murphy would soon be by my side.

"'What is the meaning of all this? You here, Clemence!' said my father, in a feeble and angry tone of voice. 'You here, Clemence, without my sending for you, and taking possession of the flacon which contains the potion which the doctor was about administering to me! Will you explain to me such singular conduct?'

"'Leave the room,' said my stepmother to the nurse. The woman obeyed.

"'Be calm, my friend,' said my stepmother, addressing my father. 'You know that the least excitement might prove injurious to you. Since your daughter has come here, regardless of your wishes, and her presence is disagreeable to you, give me your arm, and I will conduct you into the small parlour; in the meanwhile, our good doctor will explain to the marquise, how imprudent her conduct is:' and she cast upon her accomplice a significant look. I comprehended my stepmother's motive. She wished to separate me from my father, and leave me alone with Polidori; who, under these extreme circumstances, would not have hesitated in using violence, for the purpose of depriving me of the flacon which contained the conclusive evidence of his criminal designs.

"'You are right,' said my father to my stepmother. 'Since I am pursued, even in my own house, regardless of my wishes, I will make room for one so officious:' and, rising with exertion, he accepted the arm which my stepmother offered him, and advanced a few steps towards the small parlour. At the same moment, Polidori approached me; but I, advancing towards my father, remarked to him: 'I am about to explain to you the reason of my unexpected arrival, and why my conduct is apparently so strange. No later than yesterday, I became a widow; and since then, I have learned that your life is in jeopardy, my father!'

"He was walking in a stooping attitude, that was evidently painful to him; but at these words, he halted suddenly, and erecting himself, he exclaimed, while looking at me with deep astonishment: 'You a widow! my life in jeopardy! What is the meaning of all this?' 'And who dares to threaten the life of M. d'Orbigny, madame?' asked my stepmother, audaciously. 'Who threatens his life?' added Polidori. 'You, sir! you, madame!' I replied. 'What a horrible idea!' exclaimed my stepmother, advancing one step towards me. 'I will prove my assertions, madame!' I replied to her. 'What a terrible accusation!' exclaimed my father. 'Since I am exposed to such base calumnies, I will leave this house instantly!' said Doctor Polidori, with the indignation of a man whose honour was apparently wounded. Beginning to feel alarmed at his dangerous position, he undoubtedly desired to escape. At the moment of opening the door, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murphy.

"Polidori was petrified at this unexpected appearance, and my stepmother was plunged in still deeper surprise. My father, agitated by this scene, and weakened by sickness, was compelled to seat himself in a *fauteuil*. Sir Walter looked the door at which he had entered, and placing himself before one which led to another apartment, so that the doctor might not escape, he said to my poor father, with an accent of most profound respect: 'Pardon me, count, for the liberty which I have taken: an imperious necessity, which was forced upon me by a desire of promoting your welfare, obliges me to act in this manner. My name is Sir Walter Murphy, as the reprobate who trembles by my side can vouch. I am the confidential friend of his royal highness the reigning grand duke of Gerolstein.'

"'It is true,' said Doctor Polidori, stammering, and shaking with fear. 'But for what purpose are you here?' asked my father. 'Sir Walter Murphy is here to assist me,' said I to my father, 'in unmasking the wretches of whom you were almost the victim.' Then, giving Sir Walter the crystal flacon, I added: 'I was inspired with the happy thought of seizing this flacon at the very moment when Doctor Polidori was about to administer a portion of it to my father.' 'A chemist from a neighbouring town will analyse in your presence the contents of this flacon, which I will now deposit in your own hands, Count d'Orbigny; and if it can be proved that it contains a slow and sure poison,' said Sir Walter to my father, 'you will then entertain no doubt of the peril to which you were exposed, and which the affection of the marquise, your daughter, has fortunately counteracted.'

"My unfortunate father glanced successively at his wife, Doctor Polidori, myself, and Sir Walter Murphy, with a distracted air. His features expressed indescribable anguish. I could read upon his haggard countenance the violent struggle which was raging in his heart. He undoubtedly resisted, with all his strength, the rapidly-increasing suspicions, reluctant to admit the guilt of my stepmother; but finally, hiding his face in his hands, he exclaimed: 'Great God! great God! all this is too horrible to be believed, and I am dreaming!'

"'No! it is not a dream!' exclaimed my stepmother, audaciously. 'Nothing can be more real than this atrocious and premeditated calumny, in order to ruin an unfortunate woman, whose only crime has been the consecration of her life to you! Come, come, my friend; let us not remain here a second longer,' added she, addressing my father: 'perhaps your daughter will not be so insolent as to force you to remain here against your will?'" 'Yes, yes: let us depart,' said my father, in excessive agitation; 'this awful disclosure cannot be true. I will hear no more of it; my reason will not stand the shock! Frightful suspicions might be excited in my mind, and poison the few days which I have to live. Nothing, nothing could alleviate such a terrible discovery!'

"My father seemed to be in such a distracted state of mind, that I wished, at any rate, to terminate a scene so painful to him. Sir Walter divined my intentions, but, desirous of exhibiting impartial justice, he said to my father: 'A few words more, and you will have to admit the afflicting truth, that a woman, whom you have supposed bound to you by the firmest ties of gratitude, has always been a hypocritical monster! You, however, have the most delightful consolation, in the affection of your daughter,

who has never, for an instant, wavered in her devotion and fidelity to you.' 'This passes beyond all limits!' exclaimed my stepmother, in a rage. 'Upon what proofs do you base such awful calumnies? Do you say that this flacon contains poison? I deny it, sir! and will deny it, until proof is produced; and even if Doctor Polidori should have made some mistake in the potion he was about to administer, is that sufficient evidence to sanction an accusation against me of having attempted—of having connived with him——No! no! I will not finish the sentence; such a horrible thought is itself a crime! Once more, sir, I defy you to present the proofs upon which you found this infamous accusation!' said my stepmother, with incredible audacity. 'Yes, upon what proofs do you rely? the torture which I suffer must be brought to an end,' added my father.

"'I have not presented myself here without proofs, Count d'Orbigny,' said Sir Walter; 'and these proofs will be furnished to you instantly, by the answers of this infamous man:' and Sir Walter addressed Polidori in German, who had partially recovered his assurance, but lost it again immediately."

"What did you say to him, Murphy?" asked Rodolph of the squire, ceasing to read.

"A few significant words, my lord—something like these: 'You have escaped, by flight, from your condemnation in the grand duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the assumed name of Bradamanti; your abominable practices are well known; you poisoned the first wife of the count. Three days since, the Countess d'Orbigny invoked your aid to poison her husband. His royal highness possesses the evidence of every statement which I have made. If you confess the truth, in order to convict this wretched woman, you may hope, not for pardon, but some mitigation of the punishment to which you have exposed yourself. You will follow me to Paris, where I will place you in a secure position, until his royal highness shall have decided concerning you. If you refuse, one of two things await you: his royal highness will either demand your surrender, or I shall instantly send for a magistrate to the nearest town; and I will place this flacon, containing poison, in his hands, and have you arrested on the spot. Your rooms in the Rue du Temple will be searched—you yourself know what evidence that examination will bring to light—and French justice will be left to follow its course. Choose between these alternatives.' These disclosures, accusations, and threats, which he knew to be true, following each other in such close succession, confounded the infamous man, who hardly expected to find me so well informed. In the hope of having his punishment mitigated, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and he replied to me: 'Address what questions you please, and I will tell the truth concerning this woman.'"

"Excellent—excellent! my worthy Murphy; I expected no less from you."

"During my conversation with Polidori, the countenance of the stepmother of the marquise changed most frightfully. Although she did not understand German, she perceived, by the increasing depression of her confederate, and by his supplicating attitude, that I had him in my power. With the greatest anxiety, she sought to catch the eye of Polidori, in order to inspire him with courage, or to implore his discretion; but he obstinately refused to encounter her look."

"What said the count?"

"His emotions cannot be described. With convulsive fingers he grasped the arms of his chair; the perspiration rolled from his forehead; his anxious and fixed eyes did not leave mine; his anguish was equal to that of his wife. The sequel of the Marquise d'Harville's letter will inform you of the termination of this painful scene, my lord."

Rodolph continued the perusal of the Marquise d'Harville's letter:—

"After a short conversation in the German language, between Sir Walter Murphy and Polidori, Sir Walter remarked to the latter: 'Answer me, was it not Madame d'Orbigny'—and he pointed to my stepmother—'who, during the illness of the count's first wife, introduced you to him as a physician?' 'Yes, it was her,' answered Polidori. 'With the view of serving her horrible purposes, were you not sufficiently criminal to render mortal, by your murderous prescriptions, the illness of the Countess d'Orbigny, which at first was but a slight malady?' 'Yes,' replied Polidori. My father uttered an afflicting groan, raised his hands to heaven, and let them fall again in a desponding manner. 'Infamous lies!' cried my stepmother. 'It is all a falsehood, intended for my ruin.' 'Silence, madame!' said Sir Walter Murphy, in a dignified tone; and then he continued, addressing Polidori: 'Is it true, that, three days ago, Madame d'Orbigny went in search of you in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, where you lived concealed, under the fictitious name of Bradamanti?' 'That is true.' 'Did she not propose to you to come here, for the purpose of assassinating the Count d'Orbigny, as you had already assassinated his wife?' 'Alas! I cannot deny it,' answered Polidori.

"At this overwhelming revelation, my father raised himself into a threatening attitude, and, with an overpowering gesture, he motioned my stepmother to the door; then extending his arms to me, he cried in a faltering voice: 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon me—pardon me! I was the cause of great suffering to her; but I swear to you, that I was ignorant of the crime that hurried her to the grave:' and before I could prevent him, my father fell upon his knees. When Sir Walter and myself raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants. Sir Walter took Doctor Polidori by the arm, and went out with him, saying to my stepmother: 'Take my advice, madame; before another hour has passed, quit this house, or I shall deliver you to justice' The wretch quitted the apartment, in a state of fear and anger that you may easily imagine, my lord.

"When my father recovered his senses, all that had occurred appeared to him like an awful dream. I was under the unfortunate necessity of relating to him my first suspicions respecting the sudden death of my mother—suspicions which your knowledge of Polidori had changed into convictions. I was also obliged to inform my father of the manner in which my stepmother had persecuted me, and her intentions and aim in promoting my marriage with the Marquis d'Harville. In the same degree that my father had formerly shewn himself blind and weak towards this woman, he now wished to show himself merciless. He accused himself, with emotions of despair, of having virtually participated in the crime of this woman, by giving her his hand in marriage, after her murder of my

mother. He wished to surrender Madame d'Orbigny to justice. I represented to him the scandal which such a proceeding would excite, and the talk about which would be so distressing to him. I urged him to expel the woman for ever from his presence, securing to her a sum which was sufficient to support her, since she bore his name. I found great difficulty in obtaining from my father these moderate demands, and he charged me with expelling her from the house. As this commission was exceedingly painful for me to discharge, I thought that Sir Walter would relieve me of the task. He consented to do it."

"Certainly, I consented with joy, my lord," said Murphy. "I delight in administering extreme unction to the wicked."

"And what did that woman say?"

"The marquise had been so exceedingly kind as to solicit from her father a pension of one hundred louis for that infamous woman. That seemed to me not kindness, but weakness. It was wrong to rob justice of such a dangerous criminal. I went to see the count, and he adopted fully my suggestions. It was agreed that he should give twenty-five louis to the wretch, in order to provide her with sustenance until she could obtain some employment. 'And what labour can I, the Countess d'Orbigny, employ myself about?' she asked of me, impudently. 'That is your own business, madame,' I replied; 'perhaps you can employ yourself as a nurse or governess. But I advise you to seek the humblest and most obscure occupation, for if you have the audacity to tell your name—the name for which you are indebted to your crime—people would be astonished to see the Countess d'Orbigny reduced to such an extremity; they would institute inquiries, and you can judge of the consequences to yourself of reviving the past. Conceal yourself in some remote retreat; endeavour to be forgotten; become Madame Pierre or Madame Jacques, and repent if you can.' 'And do you think, sir,' said she, having probably premeditated this theatrical effect, 'do you think, sir, that I shall not demand the rights which my marriage contract secures to me?' 'Truly, madame, nothing could be more unjust; it would be unworthy of the Count d'Orbigny to forget his promises, and not to recompense you for all that you have done, and all that you wish to do for him. Institute a suit, madame—address yourself to justice; I have no doubt it will settle your claims against your husband.' A quarter of an hour after our conversation, the vile wretch was on her way to the nearest town."

"You are right; it is painful to release unpunished such an infamous creature; but the scandal of a lawsuit, for that feeble old man, could not be endured."

"I readily prevailed upon my father to leave Aubiers this very day," said Rodolph, continuing to peruse the marquise's letter. "Should he remain here, he would be tortured by too many distressing recollections. 'Although his health is delicate, a journey of a few days, and a change of air, would prove serviceable to him,' said the physician who had taken Polidori's place, and whom I had summoned from the nearest town. My father desired him to analyze the contents of the flacon, without mentioning to him what had taken place. The physician replied that he could not perform the process except at his own house, and that within two hours he would inform us of the result of the analysis. He soon told us that a few doses of that liquid, prepared with infernal art, would produce death, leaving no traces behind it but the symptoms of some disease which the physician named.

"Within a few hours, my lord, I intend to start with my father and my daughter for Fontainebleau; we shall remain there for some time, and then, if my father desires it, we will return to Paris, but not to the Hotel d'Harville; it would be impossible for me to live there after the deplorable accident which has occurred. As I told you, my lord, at the commencement of this letter, the facts prove my overpowering obligations to your inexhaustible solicitude. Aided by your advice, sustained and protected by the support of your excellent and courageous Sir Walter, it has been my happiness to rescue my father from extreme peril; and I have also been gratified with the conviction, that his affection is completely restored to me. Farewell, my lord; it is impossible for me to tell you more, my heart is too full; too many emotions agitate it, and it would be impossible to express all that I feel.

"D'Orbigny d'Harville."

"I reopen this letter, my lord, to remedy a forgetfulness of which I am ashamed. Acting under your noble advice, to search for some charitable occupation, I went to Saint-Lazare, to visit the unfortunate prisoners there. I found in prison a poor child in whom you have taken some interest. Her angelic mildness, her gentleness and pious resignation, have excited the admiration of the worthy matron of the establishment. By informing you where Goualeuse is—such, I believe, is her name—is to ask you immediately to secure her release. The unfortunate child will inform you by what a terrible train of circumstances she was dragged from the asylum in which you placed her, where at least the excellence of her character has been appreciated. Permit me also, to remind you, my lord, of my two future *protégées*, the unhappy mother and her daughter, who have been ruined by Ferrand, the notary. Where are they? Have you learned anything concerning them? I beseech you to attempt to find them, that I may pay to them, on my return to Paris, the debt which I have contracted towards all the unfortunate."

"Goualeuse has then left the farm of Bouqueval, my lord?" said Murphy, as much astonished as Rodolph, at this new revelation.

"I was told, but a moment since, that she was seen leaving Saint-Lazare," replied Rodolph. "I know not what to think of it; the silence of Madame Georges* confounds me, and fills me with anxiety. Poor little Fleur-de-Marie! what new misfortune has befallen her? Command a courier to hasten to the farm, and inform Madame Georges, that I wish her immediately to come to Paris. Tell Baron de Graün to obtain for me a permit to enter Saint-Lazare. From what the marquise informs me, Fleur-de-Marie must be imprisoned there. But, no; she can be no longer a prisoner there," continued Rodolph, after reflection, "for Rigolette saw her leave the prison under the protection of an aged woman. Could it be Madame Georges! if not, who could that woman be, and where has Goualeuse gone?"

* The reader will recollect that the anxiety of Madame Georges had been lulled by an emissary of Sarah, who had informed her that Fleur-de-Marie had been removed from the farm, by the orders of the prince, and she accordingly daily anticipated her return.

"Patience, my lord; by this evening, you will learn the results of our enquiries. To-morrow, you must interrogate that infamous Polidori; he says that he has important disclosures to make to you, but to you alone."

"The interview will be odious to me, for I have not seen that man since the fatal day—when I ——" Rodolph could not finish the sentence; he concealed his face with his hands.

"But why, my lord, should you grant Polidori's request? Threaten him with the criminal laws of France, or with demanding his immediate surrender, and he will be compelled to disclose to me what he wished to reveal only to yourself."

"You are right, my dear friend; the presence of that wretch would render more distressing, those terrible recollections, to which so many incurable sorrows have attached themselves, from the death of my father to the death of my poor little girl. I know not why, but the further I advance in life, the more I suffer from the loss of my child. How much I should have loved her! how dear to me would have been the offspring of my first love—of my first pure confidence, or rather of my young illusions. I would have lavished upon that innocent creature, those treasures of affection of which her odious mother is unworthy. And then, it seems to me that the child, such as I imagine her to be, by the purity of her soul, the excellence of her qualities, would have subdued the remorse which is connected, alas! with her fatal birth."

"My lord, I observe with pain the increasing influence which these fruitless regrets exercise over your mind."

After a few moments' pause, Rodolph said to Murphy: "I am now able, my friend, to open my heart to you. I love—I love profoundly and ardently, a woman who is worthy of the most elevated, the most devoted affection. And it is since my heart has opened afresh to the delights of love, it is since my mind has been predisposed to tender emotions, that I feel most acutely the loss of my daughter. I had reason to fear that an attachment might diminish the bitterness of my regrets; but on the contrary, it has been the means of stimulating all my generous impulses. I feel that I am more kind, more charitable, and more than ever afflicted that I have now no daughter upon whom I can lavish my love."

"It is perfectly natural, my lord; and if you will excuse the comparison, I would say, that as wine developes the noblest attributes of some minds, in the same manner, love awakens in your soul its most elevated instincts."

"And yet my hatred to the wicked has redoubled; my aversion to Sarah has increased, owing, doubtless, to my sorrow for the loss of my daughter. I fear that the heartless mother neglected her; that, finding her ambitious hopes destroyed by my marriage, the countess, in her merciless selfishness, abandoned our child to mercenary hands, and that my daughter perhaps expired from neglect. I am to blame, also; I did not perceive then the sacred obligations which paternity impose. When I discovered the real character of Sarah, I should have instantly taken my daughter from her hands, and watched over her with all the solicitude of love. I should have foreseen that the countess would always prove an unnatural mother. I am to blame—yes! I am to blame!"

"My lord, your grief obscures the usual clearness of your understanding. How was it possible? After the fatal event which is too deeply impressed upon your heart, how could you postpone the long journey which was imposed upon you as ——"

"As an explation," said Rodolph, in a desponding tone.

"Have you heard anything from the Countess Sarah since my departure, my lord?"

"Since her infamous denunciations, which were twice on the eve of ruining the Marquise d'Harville, I have not heard from her. Her residence in this city distresses me: it seems to me that my evil genius is near me, and that some new misfortune awaits me."

"Patience, patience! my lord. Fortunately, Germany is forbidden to her, and Germany is waiting for us."

"Yes; we will soon depart for home. At least, during my short residence in Paris, I have the consciousness of having fulfilled a sacred promise. I shall have advanced a few steps farther in that meritorious path, which a merciful Providence seems to have marked out for my redemption. As soon as the son of Madame Georges is restored to her bosom, innocent and free; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I shall have secured comfort for the future to all the honest and laborious creatures who have claims upon my charity, we will return to Germany; and my journey will not have proved fruitless."

"Especially, my lord, if you could unmask that abominable Jacques Ferrand, the prime cause and mainspring of so many crimes."

"Although the end, in this case, will justify the means, and no scruples should interfere with the course of retributive justice, I at times regret the necessity which compels me to adopt Cecily as an indispensable instrument of vengeance."

"Will she soon arrive?"

"She has already arrived."

"Cecily?"

"Yes. I was unwilling to see her; but De Graün has given her minute instructions, and she has promised to follow them."

"Will she keep her promise?"

"She has every inducement to do so: the hope of future relief, and the fear of being immediately restored to her prison; for De Graün will not lose sight of her, and the least misconduct will be the signal for returning her to captivity."

"You are correct in your views. She has come here as an escaped convict; and when the crimes she has committed are disclosed to the authorities, they will immediately surrender her to your ministers of justice."

"And even were she not induced by her own interest to advance our projects, the task imposed upon her, calling for the exertion of cunning, perfidy, and all those diabolical arts in which she delights, will gratify her with the opportunity for displaying the detestable talents with which she is endowed."

"Does she still retain her beauty, my lord?"

"De Graün pronounces her more fascinating than ever; he was even himself dazzled by charms which were admirably displayed by the Alsatian costume which she had selected. The eye of the siren has the same magical effect upon every one."

"I never was much of a dissipated youth, my lord; but if, at the age of twenty, I had met

Cecily, even with all my present convictions of her wicked and perverse disposition, I would not have answered for my own firmness, had I been for a long time exposed to the fascinating power of her large fiery eyes, which glance from her pale and passionate face. I dare not conjecture whither I should have been drawn by her fatal influence."

"I am not surprised at your observations, my worthy Murphy, for I am thoroughly acquainted with that woman. The baron, moreover, was perfectly astonished with the appreciating manner in which she entered into the part, at the same time *enticing* and *platonic*, which we expect her to play in the house of the notary."

"But can she be introduced into his service as easily as you anticipated, my lord, by means of Madame Pipelet's intervention? Men of Jacques Ferrand's character are proverbially suspicious."

"I was not disappointed in my expectation that the charms of Cecily would appeal to the only passion in Jacques Ferrand's character, which has sufficient power to overcome his habitual craft, and lull his suspicious disposition."

"Has he already seen her?"

"He saw her yesterday. From Madame Pipelet's version of the interview, I have no doubt that the Creole has already produced the impressions which we anticipated, for he immediately received her into his service."

"The game seems to be in our own hands, my lord."

"I hope so. A ferocious cupidity and a savage lust, have led the inhuman seducer of Louise to the perpetration of crimes the most awful which the imagination can conceive; and it is only by means of that lust and that cupidity, that we can inflict condign punishment upon a wretch, whose infernal arts set at defiance all the ordinary forms of justice—a punishment which will be the means of saving the victims he has almost destroyed. You are well aware to what particular object the efforts of the Creole must be directed?"

"Cecily! Cecily! Never was more excessive wickedness, a more dangerous corruption, or a blacker soul, employed for the accomplishment of an object of higher morality, or on which more important interests, more sacred rights depended. And what says David, my lord?"

"He approves of the means which we have adopted. His contempt and horror of the woman is so great, that he is pleased that her infamous qualities can in any way be made serviceable for the ends of justice. 'If that wretch,' he said, 'could deserve the least commiseration, after all the sufferings I have experienced from her, it can only be by becoming the avenging fury of a villain who deserves all that punishment can inflict.'"

An usher having knocked lightly at the door, Murphy went out for a moment, and soon returned, bringing with him two letters, one of which was for Rodolph.

"It is a letter from Madame Georges," said he, reading it rapidly.

"What has become of Goualeuse?"

"No doubt remains," exclaimed Rodolph, after having read the letter, "that some dark conspiracy has been devised. On the very evening the poor child disappeared from the farm—at the very moment Madame Georges was about to dispatch a messenger to inform me of that event, a man whom she did not know, pretending that he was a messenger from me, came to relieve her anxiety, by stating that I was acquainted with the sudden disappearance of Fleur-de-Marie, and that I would return with her to the farm in a few days. With all these explanations, Madame Georges, anxious concerning her *protégée*, cannot resist the desire, as she informs me, of inquiring concerning the welfare of her beloved daughter, as she calls the poor child."

"It is very singular, my lord."

"But what motive could any one have in abducting Fleur-de-Marie?"

"My lord, the Countess Sarah is no stranger to this abduction."

"Sarah! What directs your suspicions to her?"

"Take into consideration this abduction, in connection with her denunciation of the Marquise d'Harville."

"You are right," said Rodolph, struck by a sudden conjecture. "It is quite evident to me, now, that her calculating spirit has been employed in it. The countess persists in hoping, that if she breaks all the ties of affection which fasten around my heart, she will force me to resort to her for consolation. The thought is both odious and absurd. I must put an end to her base persecutions. She not only attacks me, but all those who interest either my respect or my compassion. You must instantly dispatch De Graün officially to the countess, and he must declare to her, that I have positive evidence of her instrumentality in Fleur-de-Marie's abduction, and that if she does not afford me all the information which is necessary to discover again that unhappy child, I shall show her no mercy, but shall instruct De Graün to apply to the civil authorities."

"From the letter of the marquise, it would appear that Goualeuse was confined in Saint-Lazare."

"But Rigolette affirms that she saw her released from that prison. There is some mystery which must be cleared up."

"I will instantly give your orders to the Baron de Graün, my lord. But permit me first to open this letter; it comes from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I recommended Chourineur. He was to engage a passage for that poor fellow to Algeria."

"Has he gone?"

"This is very singular, my lord."

"What is the matter?"

"After having waited a long time at Marseilles, for a vessel to start for Algeria, Chourineur, who daily became more depressed and thoughtful, expressed his determination, upon the very day appointed for his embarkation, to return to Paris."

"What surprising conduct!"

"Although my correspondent had placed a large sum in the hands of Chourineur, he only retained a sufficient amount, with which to return to Paris, where he must shortly arrive."

"He will explain to us, in person, the reason why he has changed his determination. But let De Graün immediately go to the Countess Macgregor, and hasten yourself to Saint-Lazare, to inquire respecting Fleur-de-Marie."

* * *

After an interval of an hour, the Baron de Graün returned from the Countess Macgregor. Notwithstanding his habitual phlegm, the diplomate was in an unusual state of agitation. The

usher had hardly introduced him, before Rodolph was struck with pallor.

"What is the matter with you, De Graün? Have you seen the countess?"

"Alas! my lord."

"What distresses you?"

"Your royal highness must excuse me from breaking too suddenly to you, so unexpected a calamity."

"Is the countess dead?"

"No, my lord; but her life is despaired of. She has been stabbed with a poniard."

"It is indeed awful!" exclaimed Rodolph, moved with compassion, in spite of his aversion to Sarah. "Who committed this crime?"

"It is not known, my lord; the attempt at murder was for the purpose of robbery. Some one broke into the apartment of the countess, and after committing the crime, disappeared with all her valuable jewels."

"And how is the countess now?"

"Her situation is almost desperate, my lord; she has not yet recovered her senses; and her brother is in consternation."

"You must make inquiries every day respecting the health of the countess, my dear De Graün."

Murphy now returned from Saint-Lazare.

"We have more bad news," said Rodolph to him. "The Countess Sarah has just been stabbed, and her life is in the greatest danger."

"Her fate deserves commiseration, even from those who have suffered the most from her culpable conduct."

"Such a death would be, indeed, awful!—What have you learned respecting Goualeuse?"

"She was released yesterday, my lord, through the intervention of the Marquise d'Harville, it is supposed, at the prison."

"That is impossible! for the marquise, on the contrary, requests me to take the necessary steps to secure the discharge of the poor child."

"That is, undoubtedly, true; but an aged woman of respectable appearance, presented herself at Saint-Lazare, bringing with her an order for the release of Fleur-de-Marie; and they both left the prison together."

"That coincides with the information of Rigolette. But who can the aged woman be, who accompanied Fleur-de-Marie? Where did they go together? What is this new mystery? The Countess Sarah alone can throw light upon it; and her situation is such, that she cannot now give any information. It is to be hoped that she will not carry the secret with her to the grave."

"But her brother, Thomas Seyton, might furnish some information, for he has always been the counsellor of the countess."

"His sister is dying; some new plot is in the process of development, and he will not open his lips."

"We can ascertain the name of the person who procured the release of Fleur-de-Marie from Saint-Lazare, and in that manner we shall certainly learn something of her."

"It is true, my lord."

"Attempt, then, to make the discovery of that person, and visit him as soon as possible, my dear De Graün; and if you do not succeed yourself, put M. Badinot on the track. Spare nothing to discover traces of the poor child."

"Your royal highness may rely upon my zeal."

"Truly," said Murphy, "it is, perhaps, fortunate that Chourineur is returning, for his services may be very useful in these researches."

"You are right; and I am impatient to see in Paris my heroic preserver; for I never can forget that I am indebted to him for my life."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OFFICE.

Several days had now passed since Cecily had entered into the service of Jacques Ferrand; and we will now introduce the reader, who is already acquainted with the premises, into the office of the notary, at the time the clerks were at breakfast. An unprecedented and unheard-of luxury supplied the place of the wretched *ragout* which was served for the clerks' breakfast, under the administration of the late Madame Seraphin. An enormous cold turkey, in an old paper box, reposed majestically in the centre of one of the tables, flanked by two loaves of new bread, a Dutch cheese, and three bottles of sealed wine. An old leaden inkstand, filled with pepper and salt, served for condiments. Such was the bill of fare presented to the hungry clerks.

Each individual, armed with a knife and a ravenous appetite, was waiting, with famished impatience, for the signal to commence the festival. Some were exercising their jaws upon air, while cursing the absence of the principal clerk, without whom they could not, according to etiquette, commence the breakfast.

Such a radical change in the fare of the clerks, announced a complete domestic revolution.

The following conversation, eminently Bœotian, if we may borrow that term from the witty writer who has rendered it popular, will throw some light upon that important question.

"Here is a turkey that had little expectation, when he entered life, of serving as provender for the clerks of our governor."

"Neither did the governor, when he entered the life of a notary, ever expect to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"For, decidedly, the turkey belongs to us!" exclaimed *Leap-gutters**—the errand-boy of the office—with all the avidity of a gourmand.

"You forget yourself, Leap-gutters, my friend, for the bird must be to you a foreigner."

"And if you are a true Frenchman, you should despise foreigners."

"The best we can do for you, is to give you the *claws*."

"They will serve you as an emblem of the speed with which you run on the errands of the office."

"I thought I had a right to the carcass," said Leap-gutters, grumbling.

"You have no right to it, but we may grant it to you in special favour, in the same manner that the Charter of 1814, which was the mere carcass of liberty, was granted to the people," said the Mirabeau of the office.

"By the way, speaking of carcasses," said one of the clerks, "may God bless the soul of Mother Seraphin! for, since she was drowned on that country excursion, we are no longer condemned to eternal mince-meat."

"For a week past, the governor, instead of giving us breakfast ——"

* The errand-boy of the office is called by his companions, *Saute-ruisseau*, which we have been compelled to translate as above, as we are favoured with no other name for Mr. Saute-ruisseau.

"Allows for each of us, for our rations, forty sous per day."

"That's what makes me say, 'God bless the soul of Mother Seraphin!'"

"During her reign, the governor would never have given us forty sous."

"'Tis enormous!"

"It is fairly fabulous!"

"There is not an office in Paris ——"

"In Europe ——"

"In the universe! where they allow a starved clerk forty sous per day for his breakfast!"

"By the way, speaking of old Seraphin, who has seen the servant who supplies her place?"

"What, the Alsatian, that the portress of the house where poor Louise dwelt, brought here one evening, as the porter says?"

"Yes."

"I have not seen her yet."

"Nor I."

"By jingo! how the devil can you expect to see her, when the governor guards the pavilion more ferociously than ever?"

"And, besides, the porter takes charge of the office now, and what chance have we to see the damsel?"

"I have had the privilege, thank you."

"Have you seen her?"

"Whereabouts?"

"How does the animal look?"

"Tall or short?"

"Young or old?"

"I am certain she isn't as pretty as that poor Louise; she was an excellent girl."

"As you have seen her, just tell us how she is put together."

"When I say I have seen her, I mean I have seen her cap, and it was a funny one, upon my honour."

"Pshaw! how is it made?"

"'Twas a pink cap, made of velvet; I should say, a kind of hood like those which the broom-girls wear."

"What! an Alsatian cap?—there is nothing very strange in that, since she came from there."

"You don't say so."

"What astonishes you, pray?—*a scalded cat fears even cold water.*"

"Look here, Chalomel; pray tell us what one of your musty old proverbs has to do with the cap of the Alsatian?"

"Nothing, that I know of."

"Why did you spout it out, then?"

"Because *a kindness is never thrown away*, and because *the lizard is a friend to man.*"

"If Chalomel once commences with his proverbs, which have no more to do with the subject than the planetary system, he will never end. Come, swallow your proverbs, and tell us what you know about the servant."

"As I was passing yesterday through the yard, leaning against one of the windows of the lower floor, I saw ——"

"What, the yard?"

"Nonsense—no, the servant: the lower windows are so dirty, that I could not see the figure of the Alsatian; but as the top windows were more transparent, I saw her pink hood and a profusion of curls, black as jet; for her hair was dressed *a la* Titus."

"I don't believe the governor has seen, through his glasses, as much of the girl as Chalomel has: he is one of those old chaps, whom, as people say, if he should be the only male upon earth, population wouldn't increase."

"There is nothing very surprising in that; *his laugh is the best who laughs last*, and, moreover, *punctuality is the politeness of kings.*"

"How tedious Chalomel is, when he attempts to be so."

"*Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are.*"

"Isn't that pretty!"

"I have an idea that it is superstition which has made the governor so cursedly stupefied of late."

"I guess he gives us the forty sous for our breakfast, as a sort of penance."

"I believe that the old chap is mad."

"Or sick, perhaps."

"It seems to me, that the old fellow has a wild look about the eyes."

"We see but very little of him now; he who was once our nightmare—always in his study from morning to night, and ready to pounce upon our backs, stays away entire days, without poking his nose into the office."

"The consequence is, that the principal clerk has all the business to do."

"And, therefore, we shall starve to death waiting for him."

"What changes have taken place in this office!"

"Poor Germain would be confounded if he were told: 'Just think, my boy, that the governor gives us forty sous for our breakfast!' 'Pshaw! it is impossible,' he would say. 'It is so possible, that he has announced it to me, Chalomel, in my own person.' 'You are jesting.' 'I jest! This is the way it occurred: during two or three days which followed the death of Madame Seraphin, we had no breakfast at all. We liked that well enough, for no breakfast at all was better than that she gave us; but, on the other hand, our luncheon cost us money. However, we were patient, and said: 'The governor has got no servant, no housekeeper, and when he gets one, we shall have to live on hash again.' It wasn't so, my poor Germain; the old fellow finally employed a servant, and our breakfast was still buried in the river of oblivion. I was appointed a sort of deputy, to present to the governor the complaints of the stomach; he was with the principal clerk. 'I do not want to feed you in the morning,' said he, in a gruff, surly tone; 'my servant has no time to prepare your breakfast.' 'But, sir, you are bound to give us our morning meal.' 'Well, you may send to the *restaurateur* for your breakfast, and I will pay for it. How much do you want?—forty sous each?' added he, with some other subject evidently upon his mind, and mentioning 'forty sous,' in the same manner that he would have said twenty sous, or a hundred sous. 'Yes, sir,' I exclaimed, 'forty sous will do,' catching the ball as it bounded. 'Let it be so,' answered the notary; 'the principal clerk will take charge of the expense, and I will settle with him.' Thereupon the governor shut the door in my face. You must confess, gentlemen, that Germain would be astonished at the extraordinary liberality of the governor."

"Germain would say: 'The governor *a bu* (is drunk).'"

"That is truly an *abus* (an abuse)," said Chalomel.

"Seriously, I believe that the governor is sick."

"For ten days past, he is scarcely to be recognised. His cheeks are so hollow, that you might thrust in your fist."

"And he is so absent-minded, that it is curious to see him. The other day he took off his glasses to read a deed; his eyes were red, and burnt like live coals."

"He was right; *short bills make long friends.*"

"For heaven's sake, don't interrupt me with your proverbs. I tell you, gentlemen, that it is very singular. I presented him the deed upside down."

"Which was upside down?—the governor? It is singular, as you say. What the devil was he doing in that position? I should think it would have given him the apoplexy, unless his habits, as you say, have changed very suddenly."

"How wearisome you are, Chalomel! I mean that it was the deed which I presented wrong end foremost."

"How mad he must have been!"

"Not at all; he didn't even perceive it. He looked at it for ten minutes, with his blood-stained eyes fixed upon it, and then he gave it back to me, saying: 'It's all right.'"

"Always upside down?"

"Always."

"How could he have read the deed?"

"He couldn't, unless he can read upside down."

"No man can do that."

"The governor looked so gloomy and savage, that I dared not open my lips, and I went away as if nothing had happened."

"I have got something to tell you. Four days ago I was in the office of the principal clerk, and in comes one client, two clients, three clients, with whom the governor had made an engagement. They waited impatiently, and requested me to go and rap at the door of the study. I rapped, and, receiving no answer, I walked in."

"Well, what did you see?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand was leaning upon his arms, which were placed upon the table, and his bald head uncovered. He did not stir."

"He was asleep, probably."

"I thought so. I approached him, and said: 'There are some clients outside, who wish to see you.' He did not move. 'M. Ferrand.' No reply. At length I touched his shoulder, and he started up as if the devil had bitten him. His motion was so sudden, that his big glasses fell off from his nose, and I saw—you never can believe it ——"

"Out with it. What did you see?"

"Tears!"

"Nonsense!"

"Isn't he a queer bird?"

"The governor weep! Get out of the way!"

"When you see him cry, bed-bugs will play on the French horn!"

"And chickens will wear Suwarrow boots!"

"Pshaw! pshaw! your nonsense won't prevent me from knowing what I saw with my own eyes. I tell you I saw him as I have described."

"What! weeping?"

"Yes, weeping. And after that, he was wrathy at being caught in such a lachrymose condition, and sung out to me: 'Go away — go away!' 'But, sir'—— 'Go away, I tell you!' 'There are some clients in the office, with whom you have made an engagement, sir, and ——' 'I haven't the time to see them. Let them go to the devil, and you with them.' Thereupon he arose, as furious as he could be, and looked so much as if he would kick me out at the door, that I didn't wait for the compliment, but cut my stick, and told the clients to go also. They didn't look greatly pleased, I assure you; but for the reputation of the office, I told them that the governor had caught the whooping-cough."

This conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of the principal clerk, who came in as if pressed with business. His appearance was hailed by a general acclamation, and all eyes were turned towards the turkey.

"Without being uncivil, my lord, I must say that you have detained us from breakfast for a long time," said Chalomel.

"You must look out, for the next time our appetites won't be under such good control."

"It is not my fault, I assure you; I was more impatient than you are—the governor must be mad!"

"That's what I have been saying."

"But the madness of the governor ought not to keep us from eating."

"It should have the opposite effect."

"We can talk just as well with our mouths full."

"A thousand times better," said Leap-gutters.

Chalomel was carving the turkey, and he said to the principal clerk: 'What reason have you for thinking that the governor is crazy?'

"We were inclined to think that he had become perfectly stupid, when he agreed to give us forty sous per head for our daily breakfast."

"I confess that I was as much surprised as you are, gentlemen; but it is a trifle, actually a trifle, compared with what has just occurred."

"You don't say so!" said another.

"Is the notary crazy enough to invite us to dine every day, at his expense, at the Cadran-Bleu?"

"And give us tickets to the play, after dinner?"

"And after that, take us to the *café*, to finish with punch?"

"And after that a ——"

"Gentlemen, just as far as you please; but the scene which I have just observed is more frightful than funny."

"Give us the scene, I beg of you."

"That's right; don't trouble yourself about the breakfast—we are all ears."

"And all jaws! I see through you, my covies; while I am speaking, your teeth will be in motion, and the turkey would be finished before my story. Be patient; I will reserve it for the dessert."

We do not know whether it was the goad of hunger or curiosity that stimulated the mastication of the young limbs of the law, but the breakfast was so rapidly completed, that the moment for the story arrived immediately. In order not to be surprised by the governor, Leap-gutters was stationed, as a sentinel, in the adjoining apartment, to whom the claws and the carcass had been generously assigned.

The principal clerk now addressed his colleagues: "You must know that, for several days, the porter has been very much concerned about the health of the governor. As he sits up very late, he has seen M. Ferrand descending to the garden, several times during the night; and, whatever the state of the weather might be, whether it was cold or wet, he saw him walking there for some time, with hasty steps. He ventured on one occasion, to leave his corner, and ask his master if he was in want of anything. The governor dismissed him with such a tone, that the porter now sticks to his nest, whenever he hears the footsteps of the governor, which happens every night, whatever the state of the atmosphere may be."

"The governor may be a somnambulist."

"That is very improbable; but these nocturnal promenades indicate great agitation of mind. But I will come to my story. I went this morning into the study of the governor, to ask him for some signatures. As I was about to open the door, it seemed to me, that I heard voices inside. I stopped for a moment, and I distinguished two or three deep groans: they sounded like stifled cries of distress. After a moment's hesitation, fearing some accident, I opened the door."

"What did you see?"

"What do you suppose I saw?—the governor upon his knees, on the floor!"

"On his knees!"

"On the floor!"

"Yes, kneeling on the floor, with his face buried in his hands, and his elbows leaning on one of his old easy chairs."

"That is easily explained: he was offering up an extra prayer. He is a very pious man."

"It must have been a singular prayer; for I could hear nothing but stifled groans, except that he occasionally muttered, 'My God! my God!' like a man in despair. Upon seeing him in that condition, I did not know whether it was best for me to remain or depart."

"That would also have been my *political* opinion."

"I remained there in great embarrassment, when the governor arose, and turned suddenly towards me. He had an old pocket handkerchief between his hands; his glasses remained upon the chair. Never, never in my life, gentlemen, have I seen such an expression of countenance: he looked like a demoniac. I started back, frightened—yes! upon my word of honour, frightened. The notary then ——"

"Grasped you by the throat?"

"No, far from it. He looked at me first with a wild gaze, dropped the handkerchief, which he had torn to pieces with his teeth, and exclaimed, throwing himself in my arms: "Alas! I am very wretched."

"What a scene! Are you jesting?"

"Jesting? no! In spite of his hideous face, when he uttered those words, his voice was so subdued and so gentle."

"So gentle? nonsense! There is not a watchman's rattle, nor a screech-owl with a cold, but appears musical to my ears, compared with the voice of the governor."

"That may be so; but at that moment his voice was so plaintive, that I felt almost moved; for you know that M. Ferrand is not much inclined to exhibit his feelings. 'Sir,' said I to him, 'believe—rest assured, that ——' 'Allow me, I pray *thee*,' said he, interrupting me; 'it is a great relief to be able to confide to another that we are suffering.' He evidently mistook me for some other person."

"Did he say *thou** to you! Then you owe us two bottles of Bordeaux wine:—

"'When *thou* and *thee* the gov'nor say,'
For all our drinks you then must pay.

"It is a proverb which says so, and proverbs are sacred: they are the wisdom of nations."

"Come, come, Chalomel, relieve us from your wise saws and modern instances."

"You may imagine, gentlemen, that when the governor said *thou* to me, I saw at once that he had mistaken me for some one else, or that he was in a raging fever. I released myself from his embrace, saying to him: 'Be calm, sir, be calm; it is I.' Then he looked upon me with a vacant stare of amazement."

* *Thou* is, in French, a familiar mode of address.

"Now you are telling the truth."

"His eyes were wild. 'Ha! What is it? Who are you? What do you want?' And at each question he passed his hand over his brow, as if to drive away the cloud which darkened his thoughts."

"Darkened his thoughts! Bravo! M. Principal Clerk! you and I must write a melodrama:—

"'The man that speaks so well, by all that's bright,
Should on a melodrama show his might.'"

"Hold your tongue, Chalomel."

"I don't understand how it is, but when he was restored to his composure, he sang a very different song. He frowned most terribly; and he said to me, severely, without giving me time to respond: 'What have you come here for? Have you been long here? Can I not remain in my room without being surrounded by spies? What did I say? What have you heard? Answer me! answer me!' Upon my word, he looked so savage, that I answered: 'I have heard nothing, sir; I entered this very moment.' 'Do you not deceive me?' 'No, sir.' 'Well, what is wanted?' 'I came to ask you for some signatures, sir.' 'Give me those papers.' And he seated himself to sign half-a-dozen instruments without reading them. He, who never before placed his name to any instrument without spelling it over twice, letter by letter. I observed that his hand would stop occasionally during a signature, as if he was absorbed by some fixed idea, and then he would continue to sign away almost convulsively."

"When all the papers were signed, he told me to leave the room, and I heard him descend the private staircase which communicates between his study and the yard."

"I adhere to this question: what the devil is the matter with him?"

"Gentleman, perhaps he mourns the loss of Madame Seraphin!"

"Pshaw! is he capable of regretting anybody?"

"That reminds me that the curé of Bonne Nouvelle and his vicar, have several times called to see the governor, but they were not admitted: that is as astonishing as any other circumstance, for formerly, they were eternally here."

"What bothers me, is to know what kind of repairs the carpenter and the locksmith have been employed about in the pavilion."

"The fact is, that they have been engaged there for three days in succession."

"And besides, on one evening, some furniture was brought in a large box."

"As for me, gentlemen, I give it up, as the swan of Cambrai has it."

"It is, perhaps, remorse for the imprisonment of Germain, which torments him."

"Remorse in the notary's breast! it is too hard and too tough, as the eagle of Meaux hath it."

"That Chalomel is a funny rogue."

"By the way, poor Germain will have famous recruits in his prison."

"How so?"

"I read in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, that the gang of robbers and murderers who were arrested on the Champs Elysées, in one of the small subterranean taverns there ——"

"What caves they are!"

"That the gang of reprobates have been committed to La Force."

"Poor Germain! it will afford him very select society."

"Louise Morel will have her share of the recruits also; for in the gang, they say, there is an entire family of thieves and murderers, from father to son, and from mother to daughter."

"The women will be sent to Saint-Lazare, where Louise is confined."

"It was, perhaps, one of that gang who assassinated the countess, who lives near the Observatory, one of the clients of the governor. He has sent me often enough to inquire about that countess. He seems to take great interest in her health. I must be just; it is the only subject upon which he seems to have any reason left. Even yesterday, he asked me to inquire concerning the situation of the Countess Macgregor."

"Well, how is she?"

"Oh, the same answer is always given; hope one day, despair the next; they never know whether she will survive from one day to the other. The day before yesterday, they gave her up; but yesterday, they were slightly encouraged. What renders her condition more desperate is, that she has been attacked with a brain fever."

"Did you enter the house, and see the place where the murder was committed?"

"Oh, no, indeed; I went no further than the gate, and the porter is not very communicative, I assure you."

"Gentlemen! gentlemen! beware! here is the governor coming in," said Leap-gutters, entering the office, armed with his carcass.

The young men immediately hastened to the table, driving their pens with commendable velocity, while Leap-gutters deposited the skeleton of the turkey in a box filled with documents.

Jacques Ferrand made his appearance; his sandy hair, in which a few grey locks were seen, escaping from his old silk cap, fell in disorder around his temples. The veins which were seen in the region of his head, were swollen with blood, while his face was of a livid pallor. The expression of his eye was concealed beneath his broad, green glasses; but the strange alteration of his countenance indicated clearly the ravages of a devouring passion. He passed slowly through the office, without uttering a word to his clerks—without being conscious of their presence—entered the room were the principal clerk was employed, passed through it as well as his own study, and descended the private staircase which led to the yard. The notary having left all the doors open behind him, the clerks had good reason for being astonished at the strange conduct of their governor, who had entered by means of one staircase, and departed by another, without pausing in any of the rooms which he passed through, in such an abstracted and mechanical manner.

CHAPTER XXV.

THOU SHALT NOT BE LIBIDINOUS.

It was dark. The profound silence which reigned throughout the pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand, was interrupted by a blast of wind, and the dashing of the rain against the wall. These mournful sounds seemed to add to the ominous solitude of the notary's abode. In a sleeping apartment upon the second floor, comfortably fitted up with new furniture, and with a thick carpet upon the floor, a young female was seen standing before a bright fire, which sparkled in the chimney.

The most singular and striking feature in the arrangement of the room, was, that in the middle of the door, which was very securely bolted, there was a small aperture or wicket, some five or six inches square, so arranged, that it could be opened from the outside.

A lamp, with a shade of ground glass, dispensed a mellowed light throughout the room, the walls of which were covered with paper of a pink shade; while the hangings of the windows and couch, and the covering of a large sofa, were of silk-damask, of the same shade. We have been thus particular in describing these details, in order to show that the luxurious pretensions of the apartment indicated an entire revolution in the miserly spirit and Spartan contempt of comfort which characterised Jacques Ferrand.

Relieved against that pink-coloured paper, was seen the voluptuous and enchanting figure of the Creole, which we will now attempt to portray. The bloom of life had added the finish to her tall and beautiful form; the full swell of her bust, and the broad development of her frame beneath, gave to her round and beautiful waist such a slender and graceful appearance, that she might have used her necklace as a belt.

The Alastian costume which she wore, was admirably adapted to display to full advantage the exciting charm of her figure, and increase the effect which the peculiar style of Cecily's beauty could not fail to produce. A spencer of dark merino was just sufficiently parted to disclose the swell of her bosom; the sleeves were stretched by the rounded arms of the *metisse;* its seams were embroidered with red worsted, and a row of silver buttons were coquettishly fastened upon it in front. The short orange-coloured gown, seemed almost too wide, such ample folds were necessary to inclose the luxurious form beneath, and yet the garment displayed the sculptured contour of her limbs; while her tapering ancles were tightly wrapped in blue and scarlet stockings, in the style of the old Flemish painters, who so kindly display the garters of their robust heroines.

Never did an artist dream of a more perfect model of beauty and proportion, than the leg of Cecily presented. The light and slender ancle swelled into faultless symmetry above, and terminated below in such a delicate foot, that it was fairly lost in a little black morocco shoe, with a silver buckle.

Slightly inclining on one side, Cecily stood in front of the glass upon the mantel. The spencer was thrown open, and revealed the naked loveliness of her neck and bosom of Parian whiteness, but without transparency. While removing the small cap from her head, to substitute in its place a Madras handkerchief, the Creole revealed a most luxuriant growth of raven hair, which parted upon the middle of the head, and curling naturally, fell as low as the junction of the neck and shoulders. It is necessary to be acquainted with the inimitable taste, peculiarly their own, with which the Creoles twist bright-coloured handkerchiefs about their heads, to form any idea of the graceful head-gear which Cecily assumed for the night; and of the delightful blending of its variegated colours with the silky ringlets of her dark hair, which, escaping in many places from its folds, fell down upon the pale but full

cheek of Cecily. Both of her arms were now raised to her head, and her small fingers employed in perfecting a large bow behind her left ear.

There was a magic about Cecily's countenance, which impressed itself for ever upon the imagination of the individual who had once beheld it. Cheeks perfectly oval, and of a hue like the leaf of a camelia gilded by a ray of the sun, were surmounted by a bold and slightly projecting brow, beneath which shone those eyes of extraordinary size and of peculiar expression, from which her mysterious powers of enchantment flashed. The pupil covered nearly all of the visible part of the organ; and between its dark orb and the long curved lashes which sheltered it, the blue transparency of the ball could scarcely be discerned. Her chin was round, and finely chiselled; her nose straight, with nostrils that dilated at the slightest emotion; and the pouting ruby of her lips, was at the same time impudent and amorous. Let the reader imagine this magical eye, flashing from a countenance of peculiar shade; lips smooth and dewy, like moistened coral; a form of most exciting proportions, and supple as that of a panther, and he can form some idea of an incarnation of that sensuality which is kindled beneath a tropical sun. Every one has heard of those enchanting vampires of southern climes, who have even revealed themselves in mortal shape to a few Europeans, who weave a spell around their devotees, which cannot be broken; wrap all his senses and all his energies in voluptuous enjoyment, and intoxicate and exhaust their victim by means of their fatal blandishments, that not a drop of his blood, nor an atom of his gold is left; leaving him only, in the forcible metaphor of that country, *his tears to drink, and his heart to gnaw.* Such was Cecily.

For a time, her detestable instincts had been restrained by her warm affection for David; but they developed themselves in Europe, from the combined effect of a high state of civilization, and a northern climate.

Instead of pouncing upon her prey at once, like others of her class, who think of devouring, as soon as possible, one more fortune, and one more life, Cecily would first fasten upon her victim that irresistible eye; she would draw him by every seducing art which sensuality could suggest, gradually, step by step, to the brink, to the centre of the whirlpool which raged around her. She would, with refined cruelty, pause to view him panting, suffering, tortured, burned with unsatisfied desire, prolonging his raging delirium by every refinement which her art could suggest, until, conquered by the fury of her own instincts, she clasped him in her murderous embrace. The famished tiger which leaps upon the prey, which she devours with a roar, inspires less horror than the serpent, which fascinates its victim by a silent gaze, draws it nearer by degrees, twines about it inextricable folds, squeezes slowly away the life that is palpitating under its scaly sides, and seems to feed as much upon its sufferings as upon its blood.

Cecily, as we have said, had but recently arrived from Germany. She had been formerly ruined by a man awfully depraved, and for some time continued to exercise and display her dangerous blandishments unknown to David, who loved her with blind idolatry; but soon the guilt of her adventures was unveiled, horrible disclosures were made, and the wretched woman was condemned to imprisonment for life. Add to all these powers of fascination, a mind adroit, cunning, insinuating; an intellect so acute, that in one year, she learned to speak both French and German with facility, and occasionally with natural eloquence; and finally, a corruption worthy of the courtesan queens of ancient Rome; undaunted audacity, and inclinations which suffered nothing to stand in the way of their indulgence, and the reader will have some idea of the new servant of Jacques Ferrand — the resolute creature who had dared to venture her head within the jaws of the wolf. And yet, by a strange waywardness of mind, when she had learned from the Baron de Graün, that she was to practise upon the beastly appetite of the notary all her powers of fascination, without affording the slightest opportunity for gratifying them, and also for what ends of just retribution her unrivalled blandishments were called in play, Cecily entered into the part she was expected to perform with great zest, or rather with a ferocious antipathy to Jacques Ferrand, which had been stimulated by the narration of his inhuman violence towards Louise—a narration which had been rendered necessary, in order to guard the Creole against a similar stratagem of the monster.

Some retrospective words concerning the notary are indispensable. When Cecily had been presented to him by Madame Pipelet, as an orphan over whom she wished herself to exercise no control, Jacques Ferrand was less impressed with the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her glances—glances which, at the first interview, kindled a flame in his combustible temperament which disturbed the operations of his reason. We alluded to this peculiarity of his disposition in narrating his interview with the Duchess de Lucenay, that the man who was ordinarily so cool, so collected, so crafty, so cunning, forgot his calculations and his profound dissimulation when the demon of lust obscured his understanding. Besides, he had no reason for distrusting the *protégés* of Madame Pipelet. After her interview with the portress, Madame Seraphin had proposed to the notary to supply the place of Louise with a young girl equally dependent, and he had accepted the proposal with eagerness, in the hope of taking advantage with impunity of the unprotected and friendless condition of his servant. His suspicions being lulled, Jacques Ferrand found, in the progress of these events, additional reasons for security. Everything corresponded with his wishes. The death of Madame Seraphin had relieved him from a dangerous accomplice; the supposed death of Fleur-de-Marie delivered him from a living evidence of one of his early crimes; and, finally, thanks to the death of Chouette, and the unexpected murder of the Countess Sarah Macgregor (for her life was despaired of), he had no apprehensions of any disclosures which these two women might make, for their researches after his victims might have proved fatal. We repeat, that no sentiment of suspicion was now harboured in the mind of the notary, to counterbalance his sudden and irresistible attraction towards Cecily. He seized with avidity the opportunity of securing, in his solitary dwelling, the pretended niece of Madame Pipelet.

After having disclosed to the reader the character, habits, and peculiar circumstances in which Jacques Ferrand was now placed, the fascinating charms and blandishments of the

Creole, which we have attempted to describe, a few additional facts which we shall soon explain, will satisfactorily account, we hope, for the rapid and disorderly passion of the notary for that seducing and dangerous creature.

It must, moreover, be acknowledged, that if women of the peculiar character of Cecily inspired with nothing but disgust and repugnance men of elevated sentiments and of refined and pure tastes, they assert an irresistible sway and a magical influence over a man of the unrelieved sensuality of the notary. At the first glance, he divines the nature of such women almost instinctively. He courts them; he is drawn towards them by an uncontrollable appetency, and soon mysterious affinities, an invisible chain of sympathies, bind him to the feet of his fearful ideal—for they alone can quench the flames which they alone can kindle.

A just and overruling retribution brought the Creole in contact with the notary. He was about to commence a terrible expiation. Lust, as insatiate as that of a beast, had driven him to the commission of frightful crimes—to persecute, with the malice of a fiend, a virtuous and indigent family, to scatter through it misery, madness, and death! Lust was now to be made the avenging instrument of justice; for there is a retributive connection between the indulgence of this vice, and the punishment which follows it. An elevated and pure love, even when it is not crowned with all the success it desires, can find consolation in the sweets of friendship—in the esteem which a woman, worthy of being adored, will always offer in the place of a more tender sentiment. If such consolation does not pour a balm into the wounds of the unhappy lover, if his despair is as incurable as his love, he can acknowledge and glory in the hopeless constancy of his affection. But what relief can be administered to those beastly appetites which are kindled into frenzy by mere physical charms? Such charms are as imperious over gross organisations, as moral beauty over refined and delicate souls. Sentimental love is not the only passion that is blind, sudden, and exclusive—not the only one which can concentrate every thought of the mind, every emotion of the soul, upon the beloved object, expel all other affections from the nature, and determine the destiny of a whole life. Sensual passion may reach, as in the case of Jacques Ferrand, an incredible intensity; and all the phenomena which distinguish the phases of intense spiritual love are reproduced in this passion, which is gross and material.

* * *

Although the Creole had determined that the notary should never realise the slightest gratification of his wishes, it was no part of her designs to banish from his mind the excitements of hope. But the vague and shadowy hopes with which she kept him in play, floated at the will of so many caprices, that it became an additional torture, and rivetted still closer the burning chain which he wore. If the reader is astonished that a man of the notary's audacity had not already resorted to violence to overcome the artful and premeditated resistance, he must have forgotten that Cecily was not a second Louise. Besides, on the day succeeding her introduction to the notary's, she displayed traits of character very different to those she had assumed for the purpose of gaining a situation with her master, or he would not, in the course of two days, have become the victim of his artful servant. The Creole, having learned the fate of Louise Morel from the Baron de Graün, and also the means to which the notary had resorted to accomplish his purposes, upon entering this solitary mansion, had taken excellent precautions to pass the first night in perfect security. On the evening of her arrival, being left alone in the company of the notary, who, in order not to alarm her, affected perfect indifference to her charms, and roughly ordered her to bed, she informed him, artlessly: "That she was very much afraid of robbers at night, but that she was strong, muscular, resolute, and prepared to defend herself in any emergency."

"What with?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"With this!" replied the Creole, drawing from her full dress a small stiletto, sharp as a needle, the sight of which caused some reflections to pass through the notary's mind. But being soon persuaded that it was only *robbers* that excited her apprehensions, he conducted her to the chamber formerly occupied by Louise. After she had examined the room, Cecily said to him, in a tremulous tone, and casting down her eyes: "That in consequence of the same fear, she should be compelled to pass the night on the chair, because she saw no lock nor bolt upon the door."

Jacques Ferrand was, even now, under the influence of her fatal charms, her magical eye; but unwilling to endanger his eventual success by arousing the suspicions of the Creole, he told her, in a gruff voice: "That she was silly to indulge such fears;" and he promised her, that during the next day, a bolt should be placed upon the door.

That night, *the Creole did not retire.*

The next morning, the notary went up to her room, for the purpose of informing her of the work which he expected her to perform. He had resolved, during the first days of her residence in his house, to maintain more than his wonted hypocritical reserve, in order to inspire her with a deceitful confidence. But, overcome by her rare and unequalled voluptuousness of face and figure, which by the light of day appeared even more enchanting, transported by the awakening violence of his fatal passion, he stammered forth some compliments to her beauty. With a sagacity that was fairly intuitive, the dangerous siren had perceived, at her first interview with the notary, that she had him in her spells. At this intimation of his flame, she thought that the time had fully arrived to dismiss her affected timidity, and change her mask.

The Creole assumed at once an impudent, undaunted air; and as Jacques Ferrand broke forth in new raptures at the charming person of his *new servant*, she said to him, imperiously: "Look me in the eyes; though I am dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand.

"Look at that hand; has it been accustomed to menial labour?" and she showed a white, soft hand, with delicate fingers, and nails which were rosy and polished as agate, but whose treacherous bister tinge revealed the mixture of her blood; "and that foot—does it belong to a servant?" displaying, at the same time, a foot coquettishly shod, which the notary had not yet remarked, and which his eyes did not desert until he was forced to turn them on her face with amazement.

"I told to my Aunt Pipelet the story which suited me best; she is entirely ignorant of my

past life, and believed readily enough that I was reduced to a menial's condition, by the death of my parent; but you have too much sagacity to share her error, *dear master*."

"And who are you, then?" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at this extraordinary language.

"That is my secret, sir. For reasons which I do not purpose to reveal, I was obliged to flee from Germany in my present disguise. It suited my designs to remain in Paris for some time, in the most secure seclusion that it was possible to find. My aunt, under the delusion that I was a poverty-stricken outcast, proposed to me to enter into your service; she intimated the solitary life you would force me to endure, and told me explicitly that I should never be permitted to go out. I accepted with joy, for my aunt could not have more completely anticipated my wishes. Who would search for *me* in the devout household of Jacques Ferrand, the notary?"

"What crime have you committed, to desire to conceal yourself?"

"Crime! some sweet sin, some trifling peccadillo, perhaps; but that, sir, is my secret."

"And what are your intentions, mademoiselle?"

"They remain unchanged. Had it not been, sir, for your leering and significant compliments to my beauty, I might have spared this confession until your well-known sagacity should have drawn it from me. Listen to me, *my dearest master*. I accepted temporarily the situation, or rather, I assumed the character of a servant—I was forced to do so. I have courage enough to carry out the part I have taken; I am ready to endure all the consequences of it. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, in order to preserve my situation—affording me an unknown and secure retreat; but, at the least syllable of gallantry, at the least liberty you presume to take, I will instantly leave your house—not from prudery, I assure, you, sir, for I have nothing of it about me;" and she darted a look, charged with electricity, at the shuddering notary. "No! you see I am no prude," continued she, with a provoking smile, that disclosed dazzling teeth. "Prude! heavens! when love seizes me, bacchanals are saints in comparison! If you will examine the subject, M. Notary, you will see that I intend to perform here all the duties of a servant. You have my secret—at least, a part of it. If, however, you wish to play the part of a gentleman—if you are too gallant to permit such a beautiful creature to serve you—if even, indeed, you should wish to exchange situations, and become my slave, I shall most cheerfully accept the civility. But always, remember, upon these conditions—that I never shall be compelled to leave the house, and that you shall display towards me only those *paternal* attentions becoming your age. I do not mean that this last condition shall restrict you from calling me charming, from admiring my beauty; on the other hand, such are the rewards with which I shall repay your devotion."

"The only rewards?" asked the stammering lecher.

"Yes, the only ones, unless solitude and the devil drive me mad; which I think will be impossible, for your society will dispel the one, and your *holiness* exorcise the other. Come, decide; I will occupy no dubious position, no middle ground. I will be your servant, nothing more; or you shall be mine. If you do not accept these terms, I will leave your house, and ask my aunt to find me another situation. This may appear to you singular: I will grant you that it should; but if you take me for an adventurer without means of support, you are deceived. In order that my aunt might unwittingly become subservient to my designs, I told her that I was so poor that I could purchase no clothes but these; but I can show you a purse that is pretty well lined, one end with gold, the other with diamonds." And the Creole exposed a purse, through the meshes of which the gold shone and the diamonds sparkled. "Unfortunately, all the wealth in the world could not purchase for me a retreat so secure as the retirement in which you live, and your peculiar character furnishes. Decide as to which alternative you will adopt, and you will be of great service to me. You see that I rely upon your honour; for to inform you that I seek concealment, is also to inform you that I am pursued. But I am confident that you would not betray me, even if it was in your power."

This romantic confidence, this sudden shifting of her mask, completely confounded the already shaken apprehensions of Jacques Ferrand. Who can this woman be? why does she conceal herself? were the questions which he involuntarily asked himself. Was it chance alone that conducted her to his house? Or if, on the contrary, she has come here with some concealed design, what can that design be?

Among all the hypotheses which this singular adventure suggested, the real motive of her presence in his house never once occurred. He imagined that he had no other enemies in the world but the victims of his lust and cupidity, and they were all reduced to such misfortune and distress, that he could suspect none of them of laying a snare of which Cecily was the bait. With what intention, also, could any snare of this character be laid for him? No, the sudden metamorphosis of Cecily inspired Jacques Ferrand's mind with only one doubt. He supposed that if the story which she told was a mere fiction, she was, in fact, an adventurer, who, being aware of his wealth, had introduced herself into his house with the mercenary motive of entrapping him into a marriage. But, though his avarice and cupidity were shocked at the idea of such a consummation, he thought, with shuddering, that the fear was suggested too late; for the one word which would have driven her from his premises, he found himself entirely unable to speak. These thoughts, however, did not check for an instant the ardent ecstacy with which the sensual loveliness of the luscious Creole had wrapt his senses; for, since yesterday, he had given up all resistance to the fascinating charms of the delightful being for whom his bosom yearned. All the love of which his nature was capable was excited to a most irrepressible fury. Already the idea of her departure from his house could not for a moment be endured; already a ferocious jealousy attacked his soul, that another's arms might clasp the voluptuous treasures which were denied to his own; and he felt a selfish satisfaction in saying to himself: "As long as she is secreted in my house, no other mortal can enjoy that enviable rapture."

The boldness of her language, the melting fire of her eyes, the provoking freedom of her manners, revealed clearly that she was guilty of no falsehood when she said: "I am not a prude!" This conviction, by inspiring indefinite hopes,

[Cecily Escaping from the House of Jacques Ferrand.]

strengthened the chain with which Cecily had bound him. In one word, the lust of the sensualist, stifling the appealing voice of reason, threw him blindfolded into the torrent of lascivious desires, which bore him thoughtlessly onwards.

The notary was finally forced to concede that the Creole should only be ostensibly his servant, that scandal might be allayed; and to throw around his *guest* additional security, he even relinquished the idea of employing any other servant, and condescended to serve both himself and her. A *restaurateur* of the neighbourhood was to bring his meals, the clerks were to receive money to purchase their breakfast, and the porter was to take charge of the office; and he finally agreed to provide a room on the second floor, with all the furniture which her taste could suggest. Cecily offered to sustain the expense of the change, but the lavish notary would not for a moment entertain the suggestion, and expended *two thousand francs* in furnishing her apartment.

Such generosity was unprecedented in the notary, and demonstrated the extraordinary violence of his passion.

The terrible retribution of this hardened and crime-stained reprobate now commenced. Secluded in his deserted mansion, denying himself to every human being, maddened and tortured by his insane passion, and despairing of penetrating the mystery which enveloped his avenging fury, he became her most abject menial. He waited upon her at meals—he was both the valet and scullion of the Creole's apartment.

Warned by the baron that a narcotic had been administered to Louise, Cecily drank nothing but the clearest water, ate no dishes but such as could not be disguised, selected for herself the chamber which she was to occupy, and assured

herself that it was accessible by no concealed doors. Besides, she soon convinced the notary that she was not a woman who could be caught by surprise, nor one against whom he could use violence with impunity. She was vigorous, muscular, and armed with a murderous weapon—none but a frantic maniac would have encountered her, and she had even secured herself against such a contingency. In order, however, not to drive the notary to despair, the Creole appeared occasionally touched by the displays of his tenderness, and by the tyrannical dominion to which he had surrendered himself. To inspire him with the delusion that by unintermitted acts of tenderness and devotion, by casting all his energies of body and soul at her feet, he might cause his age and his ugliness to be forgotten, she delighted in describing, in burning words, the ravishing delights with which she could wrap his senses in Elysium, should that miracle of love ever be performed.

Upon hearing these words from the lips of one who was so young, so beautiful, and so ravishing, the notary felt that his mind was wandering. Confused and voluptuous images haunted his imagination, during his sleeping and waking hours: he was, in fact, enveloped in the shirt of Nessus. These nameless tortures deprived him of appetite, health, and sleep. In spite of the cold and the rain, he would descend at midnight into his garden, and seek, by violent exercise and precipitate steps, to soothe, to cool, to quench his burning ardour. Again, he would feed his fiery eyes, by gazing into the chamber where the lovely Creole reclined upon her couch—for she had the infernal condescension to place a wicket in her door, which she frequently opened, for Cecily had but one object—to irritate, beyond all endurance, the inhuman passions of the sensual being—to exasperate him to madness, that she might be able to execute the orders which she had received. The frightful consummation seemed to be at hand. The punishment of Ferrand, from day to day, became more worthy of his crimes. He endured all the torments of hell. Absorbed, wandering, indifferent to his most important interests, to the maintenance of his reputation, as a grave, austere, and pious man—a usurped reputation, but acquired by long years of dissimulation and cunning—he astounded his clerks by the aberration of his mind, enraged his clients by his refusal to receive them, and dismissed scornfully the priesthood, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been, thus far, the most enthusiastic and noisy trumpeters of his virtues. To languor so subduing as to draw tears from his eyes, transports of rage succeeded; and when his frenzy had reached its paroxysm, he roared in his solitary lair, like a savage beast of prey. When these attacks of passion terminated, only by a general lassitude, a complete prostration of his whole system, he did not enjoy that death-like calm which is often produced by the annihilation of thought. The fiery condition of the blood of the man, who had all the vigour of mature age, gave him no truce from the conflict—not a moment's repose. His whole system was incessantly influenced by the boiling of its fluids.

* * *

As we have already said, Cecily was arranging her dress for the night, before retiring to her slumbers. At a slight noise proceeding from the corridor, she turned her face towards the door.

Notwithstanding the noise which Cecily had heard at the door, she continued, with the utmost tranquillity, her toilet for the night. She drew from her waist, where it served as a busk, a stiletto of some six inches long, inclosed in a black sheath, with a small ebony handle, ornamented with silver, perfectly convenient to grasp. This was no weapon for display. She drew it with excessive precaution from its sheath, and placed its triangular blade, of the best tempered Damascus steel, upon the mantelpiece; its point, sharp as a needle, could have pierced through a crown-piece without being blunted. Washed with a subtle and penetrating poison, the least prick of the stiletto was certain death. Jacques Ferrand having once expressed his doubts of the dangerous virtues of the weapon, Cecily had made an experiment in *anima vili*—the body of an unfortunate house-dog, which being scratched upon the nose, fell down, and died in horrible convulsions. Having placed the weapon upon the mantelpiece, Cecily drew off her black spencer, and exposed to gaze her arms, shoulders, and bosom, like a fashionable lady dressed for a ball. According to the custom with most girls of mixed blood, she wore, instead of corsets, an inner waist of double linen, which fitted tightly her form. Her orange petticoat still remained fastened under this kind of waist, with short sleeves, and composed a new costume, much less studied than the first; and harmonised beautifully with her scarlet stockings, and the varicgated handkerchief which was artistically twisted about her head. Nothing could be more perfect and chiselled than the contour of her arms, and the swell of her polished shoulders, in which two darling dimples were imbedded, and to which a small coquettish and velveted mole gave an additional grace.

A profound sigh now attracted the Creole's attention; she smiled bewitchingly, and twisted around her fingers one of the long locks which escaped from her handkerchief.

"Cecily! Cecily!" uttered a voice, to whose gruff tone a plaintive accent had been added; and the flattened and ghastly visage of the notary appeared at the wicket, with eyeballs that glistened in the darkness.

Cecily, who had been thus far silent, commenced warbling a Creole air. The words of this soothing melody were sweet and expressive; and although restrained, the powerful *contralto* of Cecily predominated over the noise of the dashing torrents of rain, and the violent gusts of wind, which shook the old house to its foundation.

"Cecily! Cecily!" said Jacques Ferrand, with his sepulchral voice, modulated into a suppliant tone.

The Creole interrupted herself suddenly, turned quickly her head, and appearing to hear, for the first time, the voice of the notary, approached the door in an easy, careless, languishing manner.

"Ah! my dear master," said she, in derision, with a slight foreign accent, which added another charm to the clear and ringing tones of her voice.

"You are, indeed, beautiful!" muttered the notary.

"Is that really your opinion? Do you think that this Madras handkerchief is well suited to my dark hair?"

"Every day I find you more beautiful than before."

"And my arm: did you ever notice how white it is?"

"Monster! monster! depart, leave me!" said Jacques Ferrand, in a furious tone.

A merry and melodious laugh from the Creole responded to this imprecation.

"No! no! I cannot endure my sufferings. Would that I did not fear death!" exclaimed the notary, in a deep voice. "But to die would be to renounce you for ever, and you are too beautiful to lose. I am willing to endure my tortures, if I can look at you."

"Look at me! look at me, I pray you! this wicket was made with that design; and also that we might interchange our thoughts, like agreeable friends, and charm away the weary hours of seclusion—which pass lightly over me, you are such a kind and excellent master! These are dangerous confessions, which I should only allow myself to make through this door."

"And will you not open the door? You behold how submissive I am. I could have attempted to enter into the room with you this evening, but I did not."

"You are submissive, for two reasons—in the first place, you know that my wandering life has forced upon me the habit of wearing this stiletto, and that I can manage, with a dexterous hand, this venomous jewel, sharper than the fang of a viper; and you know also, that the very moment I have any cause to complain, I shall quit for ever this house, leaving you a thousand times more in love, since you have condescended to profess love for your unworthy servant."

"My servant! It is I who am your slave, mocked and despised."

"That is true."

"And does not my subjection move you?"

"It amuses me during these long days, and longer nights."

"The cursed woman!"

"To speak seriously, I am rather flattered by your wan, woebegone, and distracted appearance. It is an ungratifying triumph; but you are the only man upon whom I can exert my charms."

"Am I compelled to listen to such taunts without revenge—to be consumed by my powerless rage?"

"With what slight discernment you are gifted; I have never, perhaps, addressed you in more tender terms."

"Scoff, rail at me?"

"I do not scoff, but confess that I never saw a man of your age so amorous as yourself. A man, young and beautiful, would be incapable of a passion as constant and ardent as yours. An Adonis is too much in love with himself to love us with that intensity we covet; his ardour is trifling, and nothing is so easy as to gratify it: it is his due, but he is hardly grateful for the kindness with which we treat him. But to meet your passion, my master, would be to transport you from earth to heaven; it would be to realize your most delicious dreams, your wildest hopes. If some fairy should whisper to you: 'I can, in one second, place Cecily in your arms, whom you so passionately adore,' you would believe her gifted with a supernatural power, would you not, my master?"

"Yes, oh! yes! I would."

"If you were better skilled in the language of passion, if you were better acquainted with the thousand arts by which the soul is inspired with love, I should be tempted to perform in your favour the functions of that benevolent fairy: do you understand?"

"I understand that you are trifling with my love, and railing at me, as you always do, in a merciless manner."

"It may be that solitude may suggest to me singular fancies." Thus far, in their interviews, the tone of Cecily had been satirical, sardonic; but she pronounced these last words with such a serious and deliberative tone, and accompanied them with such a significant glance of her eye, that the notary started.

"Speak no more! do not cast such glances on me; you will drive me mad! I should prefer that you would say to me *never*, for then I could abhor you, and drive you from my house," said the notary, who had again yielded to an indefinite hope: "Yes, yes, I should then have no favours to ask, none to expect; but woe, woe to me, I now hope, in spite of myself, that I may one day owe to your eccentric caprice what I never shall obtain from your love. You ask me to convince you of my passion. Great God! do you not behold how wretched I am? I do, however, all that is in my power to gratify your slightest wishes. You asked to be concealed from every eye; have I not concealed you at the risk of my own reputation and the sacrifice of my most important interests? I know not who you are; do I not respect your secret? Do I ever speak to you of it? I asked you of your past life, and you gave me no reply."

"Well, I was wrong, and I will give you a proof of blind confidence, my master. Listen to me."

"Ah! you are about again to practise some cruel joke."

"I am serious now. You deserve to know the life of her to whom you have granted such a generous hospitality;" and the Creole added, with a weeping, hypocritical compunction of tone: "I am the daughter of a brave soldier—the brother of my Aunt Pipelet; I received an education to which my rank did not entitle me. I was first ruined, and then abandoned by a rich young man, and to escape the wrath of my father, who was intractable on all points of honour, I was obliged to flee from my country." Then bursting into a laugh, Cecily added: "Is not that a very pretty history, and very probable? for it has been often related. Satisfy your curiosity with this, until I indulge you with some more piquant revelation."

"I was very sure it was some merciless pleasantry," said the notary, with concentrated rage; "nothing can move you—nothing! What must I do?—speak, I pray you. I wait upon you as the meanest valet—for your sake I neglect my most important affairs—I am no longer conscious of what I do. I am the object of surprise and derision to my clerks; my clients will no longer entrust me with their business; I have refused myself to several pious friends, whom I formerly received; I dare not listen to public scandal upon this total change in my habits. But you do not know, you cannot conceive of the fatal consequences which my blind infatuation may drag in its train. Are not these proofs of my sacrifices and my devotion? Do you wish for more? Speak: is it gold which you require? The world thinks me richer than I am, but I ——"

"What shall I do with your gold?" said Cecily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders. "What use have I for gold, while secluded in this room? You have no invention."

"Is it my fault, that you are a prisoner?

Does this room dissatisfy you? Speak; give out your commands."

"For what purpose? for what purpose? Oh! if I expected a beloved being, melted with the passion which he both inspires and shares, I should wish for gold, silk, perfumes, all the appliances of luxury and art. Nothing could be too sumptuous, too splendid, too enchanting, with which to adorn the bower of love," said Cecily, with a passionate tone, which rung upon the fibres of the notary.

"Well, if you need these luxurious refinements, speak the word, and ——"

"For what purpose? for what purpose? How shall I employ the frame, when the picture is absent? and the adored being, my master—where, where is he?"

"It is true!" exclaimed the notary, bitterly; "I am old, I am ugly; I can inspire nothing but disgust and aversion. She heaps upon me contempt—she scoffs at my sufferings. I have not the strength to banish her from my presence—I have only strength to endure."

"Oh! the miserable sniveller! a lackadaisical swain, with his tears, and sighs, and complaints!" said Cecily, in a sardonic and contemptuous tone. "He does nothing but whine and despair; and he has been for ten days secluded with a young woman, in a deserted house!"

"But that woman despises me; she is armed—she is locked up!" exclaimed the notary, in a rage.

"Surmount her disdain; charm the dagger from her grasp; compel her to unlock the door—not by physical force, for that would be unavailing."

"How then?"

"By the force of your passion."

"Passion! how can I inspire it?"

"You have the heart of a sexton, in the body of a notary. You force from me pity. Shall I teach you what part to play? You are ugly: be terrible, and your hideousness will disappear. You are old: be energetic, and I will overlook your age. You are repulsive: be formidable. Since you cannot be the noble stallion, that whinners proudly, surrounded by his amorous mates, be not the stupid camel, who bends the knee and stoops his back for the burthen. Be a tiger: an old tiger, who roars in the midst of carnage, is not without his beauty; his tigress responds to him from the depth of the wilderness."

This language, which was not without savage and natural eloquence, thrilled upon every nerve of Jacques Ferrand, as he gazed upon the wild and almost ferocious expression of Cecily, who, with a heaving bosom, distended nostril, and haughty curl of her lip, fastened upon him her large, black, and burning eyes. Never had she appeared more beautiful.

"Speak, speak again!" he passionately exclaimed. "There is now sincerity in your tone. Oh! if I could ——"

"What one wishes to do, he can do," said Cecily, sternly.

"But ——"

"But, I tell you, if you had the will, repulsive as you are, I should envy your position. If it was for me to seduce a beautiful woman, whom solitude had committed to my hands—a woman who comprehends everything, because she is capable of everything—I would be restrained by no scruples, I would seduce her; and, when it was once accomplished, all that was unprepossessing before, would now be converted into charms. What pride, what triumph, there would be in saying: 'I have known how to make my age and ugliness forgotten; I owe not the love which is shown to me, to compassion, to caprice; I owe it to my courage, my spirit, my energy; I owe it, finally, to the vehemence of a passion which nothing could resist.' Yes, and if the most beautiful and graceful youths should assail the constancy of that woman, who has bowed before the tremendous energy of my love, she would scorn them all, for she knows that effeminate fops would fear to derange the 'tie' of their cravat, or the curls of their perfumed locks, in obeying her fantastic caprice; whereas, should she plunge her handkerchief into a burning furnace, she is assured that, at her beck, the dauntless tiger would plunge after it with a roar of joy!"

"Yes, yes! I would do it! I would do it! Try me! try me!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, in an impassioned tone.

Cecily continued, as she drew still nearer the wicket, and fastened upon the notary the dazzling and fascinating power of her magical eye: "For that woman would be well aware, that those soft and contemptible fops would hoard their gold, if gold they had, had the object of their weak idolatry some elegant caprice to gratify; or, if they were penniless, they would scruple at some slight peccadillo, in order to obtain it; whereas, her resolute tiger ——"

"Would hesitate at nothing! he would sacrifice honour! fortune! principle! everything!"

"Everything!" said Cecily, placing her soft and moist palm upon the bony and hairy fingers of the notary, whose hand, passed through the wicket, grasped the door. For the first time, the soft and velvet skin of the Creole touched his own; his features suddenly changed, his frame heaved, and he drew deep respirations.

"How that woman would be beloved!" exclaimed Cecily. "If she had an enemy, she would point him out to her old tiger, and say: 'Strike!' and ——"

"He would strike!" said Jacques Ferrand, endeavouring to bring his parched lips near the fingers of the Creole.

"True! would her tiger strike?" pressing gently her hand upon that of the notary.

"To clasp you in these arms, I could commit a crime!"

"Hold, master!" said Cecily, withdrawing suddenly her hand; "you must now depart. I no longer recognize you as the same being; I fear I am beginning to forget your ugliness. You must leave me." And she retired demurely from the wicket.

The artful creature knew how to impart to her final gesture, and her farewell words, an appearance of real feeling that was almost incredible. Her look, at the same time passionate, surprised, and softened, seemed to indicate, most naturally, her spite at having, for a moment, forgotten the hideousness of her admirer, that he, transported with the frantic hope, exclaimed, while grasping the bars of the wicket: "Cecily! Cecily! return, I pray you! give orders to your tiger!"

"No, no, master," said Cecily, retreating still further from the wicket; "and, to lay the devil who tempts me, I am going to sing a song of my country. Master, do you hear? The tempest rages without—the winds are unchained; what a delightful night for two lovers seated by a blazing fire!"

"Cecily, return!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, in a suppliant tone.

"No, no—presently, when I can do so with less danger to myself; but the light of this lamp pains my vision, a soft languor weighs down my eyelids. I know not what new emotion agitates me; a partial obscurity would please me more; I feel that I am in the twilight of pleasure;" and Cecily went to the mantelpiece, extinguished the lamp, and took a guitar from the wall where it was suspended, and revived the blaze of the fire, which illuminated the apartment. From the narrow wicket where he remained immoveable, this picture was presented to Jacques Ferrand's gaze. In the midst of the luminous circle formed by the trembling light of the fire, Cecily, in a voluptuous and abandoned position, reclined upon the sofa, of pink damask, and struck her guitar with some harmonious preludes. The fire threw a roseate hue upon the languishing form of the Creole, which appeared dazzlingly bright, compared with the general obscurity of the room. To complete this picture, let the reader call to mind the mysterious appearance of a room, where the light of the fire struggles with the flickering shadows upon the walls and ceiling. The storm redoubled its violence, and its roaring was distinctly heard. While striking a prelude upon her guitar, Cecily fastened her magnetic glance upon the notary, who could not withdraw his fascinated gaze.

"Now, master," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my native country. We know not how to make verses, but adopt a simple recitative without rhyme; and between each pause, we improvise, as well as we are able, a symphony appropriate to the complex. It is very pastoral, and I am sure that it will please you. This song is called 'The Loving Woman.' It is her who speaks." And Cecily commenced a recitative, which owed its effect more to the expression of the voice, than to the modulation of the song. A few soft and vibrating touches upon the guitar, served as an accompaniment.

Such was the song:—

"Flowers, everywhere flowers!
My lover comes! the hope of happiness lulls and enervates.
Mellow the glare of day; love seeks a softened light!
To the fresh aroma of flowers, my adored prefers the warm breath of his loved.
The flash of the sun will not wound his eyes, for my kisses will close them.
Oh! my angel! Come—my bosom heaves! my blood burns!
Come! come! come!"

These words, chanted with as impatient an ardour as if the Creole had addressed an invisible lover, were almost translated by the enchanting melody of the accompaniment; her charming fingers drew from her guitar tones of the sweetest melody.

The animated countenance of Cecily, her veiled and liquid eyes, fastened upon the notary, expressed all the burning languor of expectation. Love-burthened words, intoxicating music, passionate glances, the ideal of sensual loveliness, silence and night abroad, solitude around him; all combined to destroy the reason of Jacques Ferrand, and he exclaimed, transported with the conflict of passion: "Have mercy, Cecily, have mercy! I shall run mad—speak no more! I wish that my reason had entirely left me."

"Hear, I pray you, the second verse," said the Creole, preluding again; and she continued her passionate lay:—

"If my lover were here, and touched my naked shoulders, I should thrill! I should die!
If his soft hair touched my cheeks, a purple hue would steal over their paleness,
My pale cheek would flash with fire!
Soul of my soul! if you were here, my eager lips could not speak!
Soul of my soul! if you were here—expiring—I would not for mercy cry!
Those that I love, as I love thee, I kill!
My angel, come! Oh, come, my angel! my bosom heaves! my blood burns!
Come! come! come!"

If the Creole had breathed the first strophe with a passionate languor, she inspired her last words with all that love which is sung of in classic story. And, as if the music was powerless to express the fiery ardour of her soul, she threw aside her guitar, and partially rising from her recumbent posture, and stretching her passionate arms towards the door where her victim was, she repeated, in a languishing voice: "Oh! come! come! come!"

It would be impossible to describe the electrical spark which seemed to flash from her eyes, as she repeated these words. Jacques Ferrand gave utterance to a cry of rage.

"Death! death to him to whom you could sincerely address those burning words!" he exclaimed, shaking the door, in a paroxysm of jealousy and ardour. "My fortune! my life! for one moment of that voluptuous delight which you describe in words of fire!"

Active as a panther, with one bound, Cecily reached the wicket, and, as if she controlled with difficulty the affected transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, earnest, and palpitating voice: "Well, I confess to you, I have kindled my own passions by the ardent words of the song. I had determined not to return to this door; yet here I am, in spite of myself, for methinks I hear your words echoing in my ear: 'Command me to strike, and I will strike.' Do you then love me so much?"

"Do you wish for gold—all my gold?"

"No, I have gold!"

"Have you an enemy? I will kill him!"

"I have no enemy!"

"Will you become my wife? I will marry you!"

"I am married!"

"What do you wish, then? My God! what do you wish?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind and furious; that you will sacrifice everything for it."

"Everything! Yes, I will do it; but how?"

"I know not! but a moment since, the glance of your eye bewildered me. If you could, at this moment, give me one of those proofs of excessive love, which exalt even to delirium, the imagination of a woman, I know of nothing which I could not do for you. Hasten! tomorrow the impression may be effaced from my capricious mind."

"But what proof can I give you at such an instantaneous demand?" cried the wretch, wringing his hands. "It is an awful torture! What proof? tell me, what proof?"

"You are but a fool!" replied Cecily, retiring from the wicket, with an expression of disappointment and contemptuous anger. "I have been deceived; I thought you capable of unscrupulous devotion. Good night: I pity you."

"Cecily, do not depart from me thus: return, return! What can I do? Inform me at least, for my senses wander! What shall I do? What proof of my devotion shall I give you?"

"Search for it!"

"My God! my God!"

"I was too much disposed to yield to your fancied passion, if you had the will to profit by my ardour. The feeling may never return again."

"But only speak! speak your wishes!" exclaimed the frantic notary.

"Divine them!"

"Explain yourself! command me!"

"If you have all that passionate love which you affect, the means which you should employ would suggest themselves. Good night!"

"Cecily!"

"I shall close the wicket, instead of opening the door."

"I beseech you to listen to me."

"For one moment, I thought that my own feelings responded to your passion; but the fire is extinguished, darkness has returned; a moment since, my only thought would have been of your excessive devotion, but it has passed away; you have no energy. Good night, holy man!"

"Cecily, hear me! remain—I have found the proof!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, after a moment's pause, with an explosion of joy impossible to describe. The wretch was then seized with a vertigo—a cloud passed over his understanding; the blindness and furious instinct of the beast drove all prudence from his mind, all precaution—the desire of self-preservation abandoned him.

"Where is the proof of your love?" exclaimed the Creole, who, having taken the stiletto from the mantelpiece, approached gently the wicket, lighted on her way by the blaze of the fire; and, without being perceived by the notary, assured herself of the security of a chain, which, attached to two hooks, would serve as a fastening to the door, even if the bolt was removed.

"Listen to me, listen to me," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice; "I place at your mercy my honour, my fortune, my life: will that proof of insane passion suffice?"

"Your honour, your fortune, your life! I do not understand you."

"If I place in your knowledge a secret which might lead me to the scaffold, will you be mine?"

"You a criminal! you must be jesting; and your austerity?"

"A lie."

"Your probity?"

"A lie, also."

"Your piety?"

"A lie."

"You have the reputation of a saint: are you actually a Satan! No, no! there cannot be a mortal so artful and audacious, that could have beguiled in such a manner the respect and confidence of his fellow-men. It would be to throw defiance in the face of society."

"That man is before you. That sarcasm have I hurled; that defiance have I cast in the face of deluded fools!" said the monster, with an outbreak of ferocious pride.

"Jacques, Jacques! speak not thus!" said Cecily, with an affected tremour of voice and palpitation of the bosom. "You will overcome me."

"I will give my head for a single caress! Will you take it?"

"Now you show some proof of love. Here is my dagger: you have disarmed me."

Jacques Ferrand took, with precaution, the dangerous weapon from the wicket, and threw it down the corridor.

"You now believe the strength of my love, Cecily!" he exclaimed, with transport.

"Do I believe you?" said the Creole, pressing her charming fingers upon the hand of Jacques Ferrand. "I do believe you, for I discern again that glance which fascinated me. Your eyes now dazzle with a wild fire. I love that glance!"

"Cecily!"

"You should speak the truth to me."

"You will see whether I tell the truth."

"Your brow is threatening, your expression fearful; you have the ferocious beauty of an enraged tiger. But you speak the truth, do you not?"

"I have committed crimes."

"So much the better. By confessing them, you will prove to me your love."

"And if I tell you all?"

"I will grant you all; for if you have that blind and courageous confidence, I will not call the ideal lover of the song, but I will call you—you, my tiger, I will invite to 'come.'"

Uttering these last words with a luscious and ardent expression, the notary felt upon his cheek the burning and balmy breath of the Creole, and upon his fingers the moist impression of her dewy lips.

"Oh! you shall be mine; make me your tiger, anything which you desire; and if you please, you may betray, and place my head upon the block—my honour, my life, my fortune, now are yours."

"Your honour!"

"My honour!—Hear me. Ten years ago, a child was confided to my charge, and two hundred thousand francs, destined for its support. I abandoned the child; I forged a certificate of its death, and I have retained the money."

"Skilfully and bravely done! who would have believed it of you?"

"Listen again. I hated my cashier: one night he took from my house a small amount of gold, which he returned next day; but I accused the hateful wretch of having stolen a large sum: I was believed, and he was thrown into prison. Is not my honour at your mercy now?"

"I can no longer doubt your love; to confide such secrets, proves my great ascendancy over you. I shall not be ungrateful. Let me imprint a kiss upon that forehead in which so many infernal thoughts were engendered."

"Ah!" exclaimed the notary, stammering, "if the scaffold were before me, I would not hesitate. Here me further. The child which I formerly abandoned, again crossed my path, and, as she inspired me with fear, I put her to death."

"You! and how? and where?"

"A few days ago, at the bridge of Asnières, near the Island of the Ravageur; she was drowned in a boat, by a fellow named Martial. Is this enough? Will you, now?"

"Demon of hell! you frighten, yet fascinate me. With what tremendous energy you must be endowed!"

"Listen to me, further. I was entrusted with three hundred thousand francs; I laid a snare for the man who deposited the sum, and blew out his brains; I proved that he committed suicide, and denied the deposit, when his sister reclaimed

it. Now, my life is in your hands! will you not open the door?"

"I adore you!" the Creole exclaimed, in an excited voice.

"I would dare a thousand deaths!" exclaimed the notary, with a wild excitement, which it is impossible to describe. "Yes, you are right; if I was young and charming, I could not feel this thrill of joy! The key! the key! Give me the key, and draw the bolt!"

The Creole removed the key from the door, and gave it through the wicket to the notary, saying to him, with a passionate voice: "Jacques, I am subdued by you!"

"You are mine, at last!" he exclaimed, with a roar of passion, and quickly turning the key in the lock; but the door was still bolted, and could not be opened.

"Come, my tiger, come!" said Cecily, in a languishing tone.

"The bolt! the bolt!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand.

"But if you have deceived me!" exclaimed the Creole, suddenly; "if these secrets are but inventions of your own, to deceive me!"

The notary remained, for a moment, fixed with amazement. He had indulged the hope that his object was accomplished, and this last disappointment brought his impatient fury to a crisis. He carried rapidly his hand to his breast, opened the vest which enveloped it, broke violently a small steel chain, to which a pocket-book was suspended; he took it in his hand, and showing it, through the wicket, to Cecily, said to her, in an agitated voice: "Here is contained evidence which will place my head upon the scaffold! Draw the bolt!—the pocket-book is yours!"

"Give it to me, my tiger!" exclaimed Cecily, fiercely; and drawing hastily the bolt with one hand, while she grasped with the other hand the pocket-book. But Jacques Ferrand did not release it from his hand until he perceived the door yielding to his pressure. The door, however, which yielded, opened but six inches, for it was still fastened by the chain upon the hooks. At this unforeseen obstacle, the notary rushed against the opposing door, until it trembled before his desperate strength.

Cecily, with the rapidity of thought, took the pocket-book in her teeth, opened the window, threw her cloak into the yard, and with great dexterity and courage, descended to the earth by means of a rope-ladder, which had been previously fixed to the balcony, and fell lightly, as an arrow falls upon the ground.

Hastily enveloping herself in her cloak, she ran to the porter's lodge, pulled the string, opened the door, escaped into the street, and entered a carriage, which had been stationed every evening since the introduction of Cecily to the house of the notary, a few steps from his door, by order of the Baron de Graün.

The horses started upon a rapid trot, and reached the boulevard before Jacques Ferrand had perceived the flight of Cecily.

We must now return to that monster. The situation of the door was such, that it was impossible for him to see the window which the Creole had prepared for her escape. Summoning all his strength, with a vigorous push from his broad shoulders, he finally sundered the chain which held the door. He rushed into the room, he found it deserted; the rope-ladder was still dancing from the balcony, against which he now leaned. Upon the other side of the yard, by the light of the moon, which was partially breaking from the clouds which had obscured it, he saw, in the obscurity of the passage, the gate flung open.

The whole truth flashed upon his mind—one ray of hope only remained. Vigorous and resolute, he leaped from the balcony, and descended, in his turn, by means of the ladder, and rushed in haste from the premises. The street was deserted. Not an individual could be seen. He heard nothing but the distant roll of the carriage, which rapidly conveyed away the Creole. The notary concluded that it was some belated vehicle, and the circumstance made but a feeble impression upon his mind. The last hope of finding Cecily faded away; she bore with her the proofs of his crimes. As this frightful certainty broke upon him, he fell, as if thunder-struck, against a stone post near the door. He remained for a long time in that position, silent and immoveable; his eye fixed and wild, his teeth tight together, and the foam oozing from his mouth, he fastened his nails into his breast until the blood gushed forth. His mind wandered, his thoughts were deranged. When he recovered from his stupor, he was walking heavily, and with a tottering step. The objects vacillated before his vision, as if he had emerged from intoxication; he closed with violence the door which led to the street, and entered the yard. The rain had ceased. The wind, still blowing with violence, drove before it large dark clouds, which veiled, without obscuring, the light of the moon. Somewhat restored by the bracing and cold atmosphere of the night, Jacques Ferrand hoped to overcome the agitation by the rapidity and violence of his walk. He sought the muddy alleys of his garden, walking with precipitate and irregular strides, and, from time to time, beating his brow with his clenched fist. He had now accidentally arrived near the end of an alley, where a green-house, in ruins, was situated.

Suddenly, he stumbled violently over a heap of earth freshly turned up. He stooped down, looked mechanically at some object lying before him, and perceived that it was blood-stained linen. He found himself close to the grave which Louise Morel had dug to hide her dead child! Her child! which was also that of Jacques Ferrand! Notwithstanding his hardness of heart—notwithstanding the horrid fears which agitated him—Jacques Ferrand shuddered with fright. There appeared to him something fatal in this occurrence.

Pursued by the avenging punishment of his lust, chance had led him to the grave of his child—the unhappy fruit of his violence and his lust! Under any other circumstances, Jacques Ferrand would have trampled upon this sepulchre with atrocious indifference; but, having exhausted his ferocious energy in the scene we have related, he felt himself overcome by weakness, and sudden terror. A cold sweat burst out upon his forehead; his trembling knees gave way under him, and he fell motionless by the side of that open tomb.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LA FORCE.

Perhaps we may be accused, on account of the extension given to the following scenes, of endangering the *unity* of our tale by episodical descriptions; but it appears to us that, at this moment, above all, when important questions

regarding penitentiary punishments—questions which touch the state of society to the very quick—are on the eve of being, if not resolved, (our legislators will take care not to do that), at all events, discussed; it appears to us that the interior of a prison—that frightful pandemonium, that lugubrious thermometer of civilisation—would be a seasonable study. In a word, the various physiognomies of its inmates, of all classes—the relations of family or of affection, which still attach them to the world, from which the walls of the prison separate them, have appeared to us worthy of interest. We shall, therefore, be excused for having grouped around several of the prisoners—persons already known in this history—other secondary figures destined to place in action, in relief, certain critical ideas, and to complete the initiation into a prison life.

Let us enter La Force. There is nothing appalling in the aspect of this prison. In the centre of the first court-yard, you will observe several beds planted with shrubs, at the feet of which are already springing the precocious shoots of the primrose and the snowdrop; a flight of steps, surmounted by a porch in lattice-work, around which entwine the knotty branches of the vine, conduct you to one of the seven or eight promenades allowed to the prisoners.

The immense buildings which surround these court-yards, are very similar to those of a barrack, or of a manufactory, and are kept in extreme order. There are large *façades* of white stone, pierced with wide and lofty windows, through which circulates abundantly a pure and keen atmosphere. The tiles and the pavement around the beds are kept with scrupulous cleanliness. On the ground-floor are vast halls, warmed during winter, and well ventilated in summer, which, in the daytime, serve as places for conversation, as workshops, or as refectories for the prisoners. The upper stories are used as dormitories, and are from ten to twelve feet high; the tiles with which they are paved are clean and shining; two ranges of iron bedsteads furnish these rooms; the beds are excellent, consisting of a soft and thick mattress, under which is a straw one, a bolster, clean white linen sheets, and a warm worsted coverlet.

At the first sight of these establishments, uniting all the qualifications for comfort and salubrity, we cannot help feeling astonished, habituated as we are to consider prisons as gloomy, filthy, and unwholesome dens; but we deceive ourselves. That which is gloomy, filthy, and unwholesome, is such a lodging as that inhabited by poor Morel, the lapidary, and by others of his class, in which so many poor and honest workmen drag out a wretched and languishing existence; often compelled to abandon their miserable pallet to a suffering wife, and with impotent despair to leave their wan and famished children, shivering with cold, huddled together upon filthy straw.

There is the same contrast between the physiognomies of the inhabitants of these two dwellings. Incessantly reflecting on the wants of his family, and which he can barely support from day to day, seeing a senseless competition lessening his wages, the laborious artisan will be sorrowful, depressed; the hour of repose sounds not for him; a species of dozing lassitude interrupts only for a while his excessive labour; and, when waking from this painful drowsiness, he will again find himself oppressed by the same fearful thoughts for the present, the same despairing anticipations for the future. Hardened by vice, indifferent to the past, made happy by the life he leads, certain for the future—for he can insure it by committing either a crime or an offence—no doubt regretting his loss of liberty, but finding ample compensation for it in the physical welfare he enjoys; certain of carrying with him, on his leaving prison, a good sum of money, gained by a moderate and easy labour; esteemed, that is to say, feared, by his companions, in proportion to his impudence and perversity, the condemned prisoner, on the contrary, is always careless and merry.

Again we ask, what more can he desire? Does he not find in prison good shelter, a good bed, good food, high wages,* easy work, and, above and before all, *society of his own choice*—society, let us repeat it, which measures the consideration it awards him by the enormity of his crimes? A hardened convict, then, neither knows misery, nor cold, nor hunger. What signifies to him the horror he inspires to honest people? He does not see them—he does not know them. His glory, his influence, his power among the bandits amid whom the remainder of his life is to be passed, are all derived from his crimes: how can he then fear shame? Instead of grave and charitable remonstrances, which might induce him to blush for and regret the past, he hears only savage applause, which encourages him to rob and murder. He is scarcely imprisoned, before he meditates some new crime. Can anything be more logical? Should he be discovered, and again incarcerated, he will again find repose, good living in prison, and his joyous and bold companions in crime and in debauchery. Should his depravity be less than that of others; should he, on the contrary, manifest the slightest remorse, he would be exposed to atrocious railleries, to infernal hootings, and to dreadful menaces. In short—and this is of so rare occurrence, that it has become the exception to the rule—supposing that a convict comes out of this frightful pandemonium, with a firm intention of returning to the right path by prodigies of industry, of courage, of patience, and of honesty, if he has been able to conceal the infamy of his past life, an accidental meeting with one of his former comrades would suffice to overturn all his former plans for restoration to society, which he had with so much difficulty pursued.

We will explain how this is. A hardened liberated convict, proposes an *affair* to a repentant liberated convict. The latter, in spite of dreadful threats, refuses this criminal co-partnership. Immediately, an anonymous information discloses the former life of this unhappy man, who wished, at any price, to conceal and expiate his past fault by honourable conduct. Then, exposed to the contempt, or at least to the mistrust of those whose confidence he had gained by dint of labour and honesty, reduced to distress, soured by injustice, led away by want, yielding at last to his direful torments, this man, almost re-established, will fall back again into the abyss from which he had with so much difficulty escaped.

We shall, therefore, endeavour, in the following scenes, to demonstrate the monstrous and inevitable consequences of *promiscuous imprisonment*. After ages of barbarous experiment, of

* Yes, high wages, when one reflects that, his expenses being all paid, the convict can earn from five to ten sous a day. How many workmen are there who can lay by such a saving?

pernicious indecision, it appears now to be understood that it is not reasonable to plunge into an abominably vitiated atmosphere, people whom a pure and salubrious air can alone restore. How many ages has it taken to arrive at the conviction, that by huddling together numbers of perverted people, the intensity of their corruption is so much increased, that it then becomes incurable! How many ages has it taken to discover that there is but one remedy for the invading leprosy which menaces the social body, and that remedy is SOLITARY CONFINEMENT!

We shall deem ourselves happy if our feeble voice might be, if not reckoned, at all events heard, among all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than ours, demand, with such just and impatient importunity, the complete and absolute application of the separate cell system. Some day, perhaps, society will be convinced that evil is an accidental, and not an organic malady; that criminals are almost always good in their essence, but warped, and rendered malignant by the ignorance, the egotism, or the carelessness of those who govern; and that the health of the soul, as that of the body, is invincibly subordinate to the laws of a salutary and preservative system of medicine.

The man whose only share in worldly gifts consists in strength, goodwill, and health, has a right, a sovereign RIGHT, to see his labour justly rewarded, and in such a manner as shall insure to him, not the superfluities, but the necessaries of life, the means of remaining healthy and robust, active and laborious, honest and good: his condition will then be happy. The disastrous regions of misery and ignorance are peopled by morbid beings with withered hearts. Cleanse out these impure sewers, infuse into them the love of industry, give them equitable wages, just compensation, and instantly these sickly faces, these withered souls, will turn again to virtue, which is the health—the essence of the soul.

We will conduct our reader to the parlour in the prison of La Force. It is a dark hall, divided in its whole length by a narrow passage, shut in on both sides by open gratings. One side of the parlour communicates with the interior of the prison; this is for the prisoners. The other communicates with the office, and is for the use of strangers admitted to see the prisoners. Interviews and conversations are carried on through the double gratings of the parlour, and in the presence of the keeper, who stands within the gratings at the farther end of the passage. The aspect of the prisoners that day assembled in the parlour, presented numerous contrasts: some of them were dressed in miserable clothing, others appeared to belong to the working classes; others, again, to the more wealthy of the middle classes. The same contrast of classes, nearly all of whom were women, could be remarked among the persons who came to see the prisoners. The prisoners, generally, had a less sorrowful appearance than the visitors; for this truth—strange and fatal as it may be—is proved by experience, that neither grief nor shame can resist three or four days' imprisonment, *where general intercourse* among the prisoners is permitted. Those who are most shocked at first, at this hideous communion, soon get reconciled to it. The contagion gains upon them: surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only the most infamous language, a species of savage emulation drags them on; and, whether it be to overawe their companions, by striving to exceed them in their shamelessness, or to drown reflection by this moral intoxication, the new-comers almost always pretend to as much depravity and insolent levity, as the old inhabitants of the prison.

Let us return to the parlour. Notwithstanding the subdued murmurs of different conversations, carried on in an undertone, from one side of the passage to the other, prisoners and visitors, after some little practice, managed to understand each other, if they were careful not to allow their attention to be distracted by the voices of their neighbours, which created a sort of secrecy, even amid this humming interchange of words; each being obliged to listen, but not to hear a word, excepting those particularly addressed to him.

Among the prisoners called to the parlour by the visitors, the farthest from the place where sat the keeper, was Nicholas Martial. To the sullen depression which he had evinced on his arrest, had succeeded a morose assurance. The contagious and detestable influence of *promiscuous imprisonment* had produced its effect. Doubtless, had he been immediately placed in a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the influence of his first depressions, face to face with the recollection of his crime, alarmed at the punishment which awaited him, would have experienced, if not repentance, at least a salutary dread, which nothing would have dissipated; and who knows what unceasing meditation might have effected upon a guilty mind, when forced to revert, continually, to the crimes he had committed, and their punishment?

Far from this, being thrown among a crowd of bandits, in whose eyes the slightest signs of repentance were a cowardice, or rather a *treason*, which must be dearly expiated; for, in their hardened ferocity, in their brutal mistrust, they regard, as capable of being a spy upon their actions, every man who, sorrowful and sullen, regrets his fault, does not partake their audacious carelessness, and shrinks from contact with them: thrown, as we have said, amid these bandits, Nicholas Martial, having long since known, and by tradition, the habits of a prison, soon overcame his weakness, and desired to appear worthy of a name already famous in the annals of robbery and murder.

Some old offenders, caught a second time, had known his father, of guillotine celebrity; others, his brother, who was at the galleys. He was received, and instantly patronised with savage interest, by these veterans in crime. This fraternal welcome from murderer to murderer, raised the pride of Nicholas; these praises, given to the hereditary wickedness of his family, quite intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this hideous elation, the fate which menaced him, he only remembered his past crimes, but to glorify himself in them, and to exaggerate them in the eyes of his companions.

The expression of Martial's features was as insolent as that of his visitor's was agitated and alarmed. This visitor was Father Micou, the receiver of stolen goods, of the Passage of the Brasserie; in whose house Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand, had been obliged to conceal themselves.

Father Micou well knew what penalties he had incurred for having oftentimes purchased at low prices the produce of the thefts of Nicholas, and many others. The son of the widow having been arrested, the receiver found himself almost

at the discretion of the bandit, who could point him out as the habitual purchaser of his stolen goods. Although his accusation could not be sustained by conclusive proofs, it might, nevertheless, be dangerous, and much to be dreaded by Father Micou; and he had, therefore, instantly executed *the order* which Nicholas had transmitted to him, by a liberated thief, who was leaving the prison.

"Well, how goes it, Father Micou?" said the brigand to him.

"At your service, my good fellow," eagerly replied the receiver. "On seeing the person you sent to me, I instantly set to work to execute your commissions."

"That is talking to the purpose, Father Micou—I knew you would not forget your friends. And my tobacco?"

"I have delivered two pounds in the office, my brave boy."

"Is it good?"

"Of the very best."

"And the ham?"

"That is delivered also, with a four-pound white loaf. I added a little surprise, which you did not expect—half-a-dozen hard eggs, and a fine Dutch cheese."

"That is what I call acting like a friend—and the wine?"

"There are six bottles, sealed; but, you know, they will not allow you more than one bottle a day."

"I can't help that—I must put up with it."

"I hope that you are satisfied with what I have done, my boy?"

"Certainly. I shall be so again, and I shall always be so, Father Micou; for this ham, this cheese, these eggs, and this wine, will only last till they are swallowed; but when they are finished, there will be more, thanks to Father Micou, who will give me sweetmeats when I am good, and behave pretty."

"How?—do you wish ——"

"That, in two or three days, you send me a fresh supply of provisions, Father Micou."

"May the devil burn me, if I do! it's very well for once."

"For once! Ham and wine are always good; you know that well."

"That's possible; but I am not bound to feed you with such delicacies."

"Oh, Father Micou! this is not right; it is unjust. Refuse me ham, who have so often taken *tripe** to you!"

"Hold your tongue, you rough rogue!" said the receiver, alarmed.

"No! I will submit the question to the *curious*.† I will say to him: 'Only think, Father Micou ——"

"Well! well!" exclaimed the receiver, seeing, with as much fear as anger, that Nicholas was disposed to take advantage of the power he had obtained by their *complicité*, "I consent; I will renew your provisions as soon as they are out."

"That's right; nothing but right. Do not forget either to send the coffee to my mother and to Calebasse, who are at Saint-Lazare: they used to take a cup every morning, and they would miss it."

"Still more! why, would you ruin me, you scoundrel?"

"Well, as you please, Father Micou; let's say no more about it. I will ask the *curious* if ——"

* Stolen lead. † Judge.

"Well, go it for the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him; "but may the devil fly away with you! cursed be the day that I first knew you!"

"My old 'un, with me it's quite the contrary. At this moment, I am quite delighted to be acquainted with you: I venerate you as my *foster*-father."

"I hope you have nothing more to order of me," rejoined Father Micou, bitterly.

"Yes; you will tell my mother and my sister that, if I trembled when they arrested me, I do not tremble any more; and that I am now as firm as they are."

"I will tell them. Is that all?"

"Stop a minute. I forgot to ask you for two pair of worsted stockings, nice and warm: you would not wish me to catch cold, would you?"

"I wish that you may burst!"

"Thank'ee, Father Micou; that will be for by-and-by. At present, I should like some things better; I'd like to be easy, unless they should shorten me, as they did my father. I have enjoyed life, at all events."

"Your life is a nice one!"

"It is a superb one! Since I have been here, I amuse myself like a king. If there had been lamps and muskets, they would have illuminated and fired salutes in honour of me, when they knew I was the son of the famous Martial, the guillotined."

"How very tender!—fine relationship!"

"Yes, indeed! there are plenty of dukes and marquises—why should we not have our nobility as well as they?" said the brigand, with savage irony.

"Yes! it is *Charlot** who gives you, in the palace-square, your letters of nobility."

"It certainly will not be the priest. A better reason than that: being in prison, we must belong to the nobility of the *haute pégre*,† to have some pleasure; without that, they think nothing of you—you should see how they treat those who are not *noble de pégre*. Look ye! there is here just now, called Germain, a young man who puts on his airs, and pretends to despise us. Let him take care of his skin; he is a sneaking fellow, and they suspect he is a *sheep*—if that is the case, they'll nibble his nose for him, by way of notice."

"Germain! is the young man called Germain?"

"Yes; do you know him? he is of the *pégre* then, in spite of his innocent looks."

"No, I don't know him; but if he is the Germain I have heard of, he is in a good way."

"How?"

"He has already missed falling into a trap, that Velu and the big cripple had laid for him."

"What was that for?"

"I don't know—they said that in the country he had denounced one of their gang."‡

"I was sure of it; Germain must be a sheep; they will eat the sheep. I will tell our friends

* The executioner. † Great thieves.

‡ It will be remembered that Germain, brought up to crime by a friend of his father, the Schoolmaster, having refused to assist in a robbery which they wanted to commit on the banking-house in which he was employed at Nantes, had informed his master of the plot laid against him, and had gone to hide himself in Paris. Some time afterwards, having met in that city the wretch of whom he had refused to be the accomplice at Nantes, Germain having been dogged by him, had nearly been the victim of an ambuscade. It was to escape a new danger that he had left the Rue du Temple, and kept his new lodgings a secret.

that—it will give 'em an appetite. But tell me, does Gros-Boiteux keep on playing tricks to your lodgers?"

"God be thanked, I am rid of that villanous rascal!—you will see him here either to-day or to-morrow."

"Let's be joyful, we shall have good fun—he is one that is not sulky."

"It is because he will find Germain here, that I said the young man is in a good way—if it's the same."

"What made them grab the big cripple?"

"For a robbery committed with a freedman, who wished to live honestly, and work. Ah! I dare say! the big cripple worked him famously, he has so much vice, that beggar! I am sure that it was he who broke open the trunk of those two women, who live in the closet on the fourth story."

"What women? Ah! yes!—two women; the youngest of whom set you on fire, old brigand, so pretty did you think her."

"They will not set any one else on fire; for, by this time, the mother must be dead, and the daughter not much better. I shall be in for a fortnight's rent; but, may the devil burn me, if I give a centime to have them buried. I have had losses enough, without counting the little niceties which you beg me to give you and your family. I am in luck this year."

"Bah! bah! you are always complaining, Father Micou; you are as rich as Crœsus—but do not let me detain you any longer."

"That's lucky!"

"You will bring me news of my mother and Calebasse, when you come with the provisions?"

"Yes! I suppose I must!"

"Ah! by-the-by, I had almost forgotten; while you are about it, buy me a new cap, of Scotch velvet, with a tassel; mine is now worn out."

"You must be joking, sure."

"No, Father Micou; I will have a Scotch velvet cap. It's my fancy."

"But you are furiously bent upon bringing me to ruin."

"Look you, Father Micou, don't get in a passion; it is either yes or no. I do not want to force you—but, enough said."

The receiver of stolen goods, feeling that he was at the mercy of Nicholas, and fearing to be assailed by new demands, if he prolonged his visit, rose to go away. "You shall have your cap," said he; "if you ask for anything more, you won't get it, happen what may: you will lose as much by it as I."

"Be easy, Father Micou; I will only *make you sing* enough to keep you in practice, so that you mayn't lose your voice; 'twould be a pity, you sing so well."

The receiver left the place, shrugging his shoulders with anger, and the keeper made Nicholas return into the prison. At the moment that Father Micou left the parlour, Rigolette entered it. The keeper, a man of forty years of age, an old soldier, with a rough and energetic countenance, was dressed in a close coat, pantaloons, and cap of blue cloth; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar, and also on the skirts of his coat.

On seeing the grisette, the face of this man brightened up, and showed an expression of affectionate kindness; he had always been struck with the grace, the pretty ways, and touching kindness with which Rigolette consoled Germain, when she came to the parlour to converse with him.

Germain, also, was not a prisoner like the common run; his reserve, his mildness, and his melancholy, inspired with lively interest the officers of the prison—an interest which they, however, took great care not to evince towards him, as it might have exposed him to bad treatment by his hideous companions, who, as we have said, looked upon him with distrust and hatred.

The rain was falling in torrents; but, thanks to her thick clogs and umbrella, Rigolette had courageously braved the wind and storm.

"What a dreadful day, my poor young lady," said the keeper kindly to her; "good heart is necessary, at least, to come out in such weather."

"When you keep thinking all the way on the pleasure you are about to give to a poor prisoner, you do not mind how the weather is, sir, I assure you."

"I need not ask who you have come to see."

"Surely not—and how is my poor Germain?"

"Look you, my dear young lady, I have seen many prisoners in my time: they were melancholy, very melancholy, for a day or two; and then, little by little, they became as merry as the rest; and those who were most sorrowful at first, often became the gayest in the end. Not so with M. Germain; he gets more and more gloomy every day."

"It is that which afflicts me so grievously."

"When I am on duty in the courtyard, I observe him without letting him perceive it; he is always alone. I have already told you that you should advise him not to isolate himself so much—that he should rouse himself and speak a little to the others, or he will become a bugbear to them. The jail-yards are well guarded, but an unlucky blow is soon given."

"Oh! heaven! sir, is there more danger for him?" exclaimed Rigolette.

"Not exactly; but these bandits see that he is not one of them; and they hate him because he seems proud and honest."

"And yet I recommended him to do as you now tell me, sir, and try to speak with the least wicked among them; but he cannot bring himself to it, he cannot overcome his repugnance to them."

"He is wrong, quite wrong; a quarrel is soon got up."

"Oh, good heaven! but could he not be separated from the rest?"

"Two or three days ago, when I perceived their bad intentions towards him, I advised him to place himself *à la putole*; that is to say, in a room by himself."

"Well?"

"There is one thing that I did not think of. One whole row of cells cannot be used, because it is included in the repairs now making to the prison, and all the others are occupied."

"And these wicked men are capable of killing him," cried Rigolette, her eyes filling with tears; "but suppose, by accident, that he had good friends, what could they do for him?"

"Nothing more than to obtain for him that which the prisoners who can pay for it obtain, a room *à la putole*."

"Alas! he is lost then—if they in prison hate him so bitterly."

"Calm yourself, my dear young lady, they shall be closely watched; but I say again, advise him to become a little more familiar. It is only the first step which is disagreeable."

"I will do everything in my power to persuade him; but to an honest and good heart, it is so hard, do you see, to be familiar with such people."

"Of the two evils, we must choose the least. Well, I will go and call M. Germain. But, yes, indeed, now I think of it," said the keeper, "there are only two visitors left; wait till they are gone—no more will come to-day, for it is two o'clock. I will then call M. Germain; you can then talk more at ease. I might even, when you are alone, let him go into the passage, so that you would be separated by only one railing instead of two—that's so much gained."

"Ah! sir, how good you are! how thankful I am to you!"

"Hush! take care you are not heard—it might make them jealous. Sit down yonder, at the end of the bench; and as soon as that man and woman are gone, I will go and call M. Germain."

The keeper then went to his post, in the centre passage. Rigolette seated herself sorrowfully on the end of the bench appropriated to visitors. While the grisette is waiting for Germain, we will allow our readers to listen to the conversation of the prisoners, who had remained in the parlour when Nicholas Martial left it.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

PIQUE VINAIGRE.

The prisoner who was standing by the side of Barbillon, was a slim and mean-looking man of about forty years of age, but with an expressive, intelligent, jovial, and sarcastic physiognomy; he had an enormous mouth, almost without teeth. As soon as he began speaking, he kept turning from right to left, as is customary with people who are in the habit of addressing the populace in public squares and places. His nose was flat; his head immoderately large, and almost completely bald; he wore an old, grey, knitted waistcoat, pantaloons of an almost indescribable colour, torn and patched in a thousand places; his feet, reddened by the cold, and half-wrapped up in old rags, were ornamented by a pair of wooden shoes. This man, whose name was Fortuné Gobert, surnamed Pique Vinaigre,* formerly a juggler, a liberated convict, after having been condemned for the crime of issuing counterfeit money, was now charged with robbery, committed during the night, by breaking into a house, after escalading a wall. He had been confined at La Force only a few days, and he already filled, to the general satisfaction of his prison companions, the profession of story-teller. At the present day, story-tellers are more scarce; but, formerly, every ward had, usually, for a trifling individual contribution, its official story-teller; who, by his improvisations, amused and shortened the apparently interminable winter evenings; the prisoners being locked up for the night, at sunset. If it is curious to revert to this craving for fiction and touching recitals, which is always to be met with among these unhappy wretches, it is a subject of great importance in the eyes of the thinking. These people, corrupted even to the marrow—these thieves, these murderers, prefer, above all, stories in which weakness and goodness are delivered from ferocious oppression.

It is the same with those poor, lost women; they are singularly prone to reading simple, touching, and elegiac romances; and almost always reject obscene books. The natural instinct for good, joined to the desire of escaping from the thought of the degradation in which they live, creates in the minds of these unfortunate women, those sympathies and those intellectual repulsions of which we have just spoken.

Pique Vinaigre excelled, then, in this kind of historical recital, in which weakness, after a thousand misadventures, ends by triumphing over its persecutor. He possessed, also, in an eminent degree, a fund of sarcastic irony, which had gained for him the surname which he bore; his repartees being often sardonic or funny.

He had just come into the parlour. Opposite to him, on the other side of the grating, was seen a woman of about thirty-five years of age. Her face was pale, mild, and interesting. Poorly, but decently dressed, she was weeping bitterly, and held her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pique Vinaigre looked at her with mixed feelings of impatience and affection. "Look, now, Jeanne!" said he; "do not be childish: it is now sixteen years since we saw each other. Keeping your handkerchief over your eyes, is not the way for us to recognise each other."

"My brother! my poor Fortuné! I am suffocating! I cannot speak!"

"How droll you are—eh! But what's the matter with you?"

"What is the matter with me? How can you ask! I find you in prison again. You have already been in one fifteen years."

"That's true! It is exactly six months to-day, since I came out of the central prison of Melun. I did not go to Paris to see you, because the capital was forbidden to me."

"Taken again, already! What have you done, then? Why did you leave Beaugency, where you had been sent under surveillance."

"Why? you ought to ask me why I went there?"

"You are right."

"First of all, my poor Jeanne, as these gratings are between us, imagine that I have embraced you; that I have folded you in my arms, as a brother ought to do upon seeing his sister after an eternity of absence. That being over, we can talk. One of the prisoners at Melun, who was called Gros-Boiteux, had told me that there lived at Beaugency, a released galley-slave of his acquaintance, who employed liberated prisoners in a factory where they made white lead. Do you know what manufacturing white lead means?"

"No, brother."

"It is a very pretty trade; those who follow it, after a month or two, catch the lead cholic. Out of three *cholicked*, one is sure to go to 'kingdom come;' but, by-the-by, I must speak the truth, the other two die also—but at their leisure—they take more time; they make much of themselves, and last about a year longer, or eighteen months at the most. Excepting that, the trade is not so badly paid as others; and there are people born to good luck, who can last it out two or three years. But these are the ancients, the centenaries of the white-leadians.

* Sharp Vinegar.

One dies of it, to be sure; but then it is not so very fatiguing."

"Why did you choose so dangerous a trade, my poor Fortuné?"

"And what would you have had me do? When I entered Melun for that counterfeit money business, I was a juggler. As in the prison, there was no workshop appertaining to my profession, and as I am not stronger than a flea, they set me to work to manufacture children's toys. It was a Paris manufacturer, who found it advantageous to allow the prisoners to get up his dolls, his wooden trumpets, and his sabres. Sabres of wood! Well may I swear by them, for how many of these toys have I filed, pierced, and cut, during fifteen years! It was, above all, in trumpets that I distinguished myself; and the rattles, too! With two of those instruments, I flatter myself, you would have set on edge the teeth of a whole battalion! The term of my imprisonment being up, I left Melun, a past-master of the penny trumpet order. I had liberty to choose my place of residence, from only three or four country towns, forty leagues from Paris. My only resource was my great knowledge of toy-making. Well, then, admitting, that from the grandpapas down to the very babies, every inhabitant of the village had a passion to play *too-loo too-loo*, upon my trumpets, I should still have had enough to do to earn my living; but I could not expect to inspire a whole population with such a love for music, as to be trumpeting from morning till night—besides, I should have been considered as a peacebreaker, and ——"

"Good heaven! you are always laughing."

"It is better than weeping. Finally, seeing that at forty leagues' distance from Paris, my profession as a juggler would not be much more serviceable to me than my trumpets, I asked permission to remove to Beaugency, wishing to engage myself with the white-leadians. It is a sort of pastry which gives you indigestion, but till you die of it, you live by it, and that's always so much gained; and, besides, I liked that trade quite as well as that of robber. I am neither strong enough nor brave enough to be a robber, and it is by mere chance that I committed the *thing*, of which I will speak to you presently."

"Had you been bold and strong enough, you would have determined not to steal."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"Yes; for at the bottom, you are not wicked. In that unfortunate affair of the counterfeit money, you were dragged into it in spite of yourself—almost forced into it, as you well know."

"Yes, my girl, but look you; fifteen years passed in a central prison, would turn a man as black as this nose-warmer* here, even had he gone into the jail as white as a new pipe. When I came out of Melun, I felt that I was too much of a poltroon to rob."

"And you had the courage to undertake a deadly trade? I tell you what, Fortuné, you wish to make yourself appear worse than you are."

"Stop a little. Although a mere shadow of a man, I took it into my head—and the devil fly away with me if I know why!—that I should cheat the lead-cholic; that the malady would not find enough in me to bite upon, and that it would pass on elsewhere; finally, that I should become one of the old white-leadians. On coming out of prison, the first thing I did, as you will readily imagine, was to receive my cash, which was increased by what I had gained by telling stories in the evening in the ward."

"Such as you used to tell us long ago, brother? How much they used to amuse our poor mother! —do you recollect?"

"Do I not? excellent woman! And before she died, she never suspected that I was at Melun?"

"Never; even to her last moments she believed that you had gone to the West Indies."

"How could I help all this, my girl? It was the fault of my father. All the education that he gave me was to fit me to be a mountebank, a clown, to help him in his feats of juggling and legerdemain—to swallow tow, and vomit fire; which was the reason that I could not, in learning, vie with the sons of our nobility, and that I got into bad company. But, to return to Beaugency: when I had once got out of Melun, I gathered my cash together, as I told you. After being caged up for fifteen years, a little air is necessary to brighten up one's spirits; and, besides that, without being a glutton, the white lead might give me an irrecoverable indigestion; in that case, let me ask you, of what use could have been the money I had earned in prison? At length I arrived at Beaugency, almost without a penny. I inquired for Velu, the friend of the big cripple, the proprietor of the manufactory. Your servant! there was not a shadow of the white-lead factory left—eleven persons had died there within a year—the old galley-slave had shut up shop. There I was, in the centre of that town, and with my talent for making trumpets as my last resource, and with my certificate of a discharged felon, as my only recommendation. I seek employment according to my strength, and I had no strength; you will readily imagine how I was received. Thief on one side, beggar on the other, an escaped jailbird; in short, wherever I presented myself, every one put his hands upon his pockets; I could not, therefore, prevent myself from dying of hunger in such a hole—and where, moreover, I was bound to stay five years. Seeing this, I broke my ban, intending to return to Paris to employ the talents I possessed. As I had not the means of riding in a carriage with four horses, I set off as a beggar, asking alms along the road, avoiding the *gensdarmes* as a dog would a stick. I had good luck—I had arrived without mishap, in the neighbourhood of Auteuil —I was fatigued, and hungry as a wolf—I was dressed, as you may see, not very fashionably"—and Pique Vinaigre let a jeering glance fall on his ragged garments—"I had not a penny in my pocket—I might have been arrested as a vagabond—an opportunity offered, the devil tempted me, and, notwithstanding my cowardice ——"

"Enough, brother—enough!" said his sister, fearing that the keeper, though at some distance from Pique Vinaigre, might hear this dangerous confession.

"You are afraid I may be heard," rejoined he; "don't be alarmed, I do not conceal it; I was taken in the fact; there was no chance of denying it. I have acknowledged all. I well know what awaits me—my account is made up."

"My God! my God!" exclaimed the poor woman, weeping; "with what coolness do you speak of this!"

* Short pipe.

"And were I to speak of it ever so warmly, what should I gain by it? Come, come, be reasonable, Jeanne; is it for me to console *you?*"

Jeanne wiped away her tears, and sighed.

"To return to my affairs," added Pique Vinaigre, "I arrived near Auteuil at dusk; I was fatigued to death. I could venture into Paris but at night. I had seated myself behind a hedge to rest myself, and to think over plans for my campaign; by dint of thinking, I fell asleep. A sound of voices awakened me—it was quite dark. I listened—it was a man and woman, who were talking in the road, on the other side of the hedge. 'What nonsense! who do you think would come to rob us? have we not, a hundred times, left the house alone?' 'Yes,' replied the woman, 'but we had not then a hundred francs in our chest of drawers.' 'Who knows it?" said the husband. 'You are right,' said the woman; and off they went. In faith, the opportunity was too good to be missed; there was no danger. I waited till the man and woman had gone some distance, before I ventured to come out from behind the hedge. I walked forward, and looked about. I saw a small peasant's house—this must be the one of the hundred francs; there was but this one on the road. Auteuil was about five hundred paces off. I said to myself, courage, old fellow—there is no one there; it is dark—if there is no watch dog—you know I was always afraid of watch dogs—the thing is done. Happily, there was no dog; but, to make quite sure, I knocked at the door—no answer; this encouraged me. The shutters on the ground floor were closed; I passed my stick between them, and wrenched them open; I entered by the window into a room; there was still a little fire in the chimney, which gave me light enough. I saw a chest of drawers, of which the key had been taken out. I took the tongs from the fire-place, and forced open the drawer; and, under a quantity of linen, I found the money, wrapped up in an old worsted stocking. I did not stop to take anything else; I jumped out of the window, and I fell—guess where!—here was a chance!"

"Tell me, then—tell me."

"On the back of a gamekeeper, who was returning to the village."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon rose; the gamekeeper saw me coming out of the window, and caught hold of me. He was a fellow who would have eaten ten like me; too much of a coward to resist, I gave myself up. I had still the stocking in my hand: he heard the money jingle; he took it all, stuffed it into his game-bag, and compelled me to follow him to Auteuil. We arrived at the house of the mayor, accompanied by a troop of ragged boys and *gensdarmes:* they sent people to the house, to wait the return of the proprietors. On their arrival, they made their declaration—there was no need of denying it—I acknowledged everything, and signed the process verbal. They put handcuffs on me, and marched me off."

"And here you are in prison again, for a long time, perhaps."

"Listen, Jeanne; I will not deceive you—I may as well tell you all at once."

"What! have you more to tell me? Oh, heavens!"

"Come, come; take courage!"

"But speak, then."

"It is no longer a question of prison."

"What can you mean?"

"On account of my relapse, climbing and breaking into an inhabited house by night, the lawyers told me, my account is settled: I shall have fifteen or twenty years in the galleys, and pillory into the bargain."

"The galleys! and you so weak! it will kill you," cried the unhappy woman, sobbing hysterically.

"And if I had taken service with the white-leadians?"

"But the galleys! my God! the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red jacket instead of a brown one; and then, I have always had great curiosity to see the wide ocean. What a land-lubber I am, eh?"

"But the pillory! unfortunate fellow! to be exposed to the contempt of all the world! Oh, my God! my God! my poor brother!" and the unhappy woman again burst into tears.

"Come, come, Jeanne, don't give way so; it is but an unpleasant quarter of an hour to pass—and I believe, moreover, that one is seated—and then, am I not accustomed to appear before a crowd? When I was playing my juggling tricks, I always had lots of people round me. I shall fancy that I am playing some of my legerdemain tricks; and, should I find it too disagreeable, I can shut my eyes—then it would be as if no one was looking at me."

Though speaking with so much barefaced indifference, this unfortunate man wished rather to encourage and console his sister, than to affect a criminal insensibility to his position. To a man accustomed to a prison life, and who is necessarily dead to every sense of shame, the galleys is, in fact, only a change of condition—*a change of jacket*—as Pique Vinaigre said, with hideous truth.

A great many of the men confined in central prisons, even prefer the galleys, on account of the noisy and animated life they lead there; and often make attempts to murder, for the express purpose of being sent to Brest or to Toulon.

This is easily understood. Before going to the galleys, they had nearly as much work to do, as at their own trades.

The condition of the most honest labourers in the seaports, is not less severe than that of the galley-slaves. They go into the workshops, and leave them, at the same hours. In fine, the truckle-beds on which they repose their wearied limbs, are often not more soft than those of a galley-crew. It may be said, they are free; yes: free one day in the week—the Sunday—and that day is also one of repose to the galley-slave!

But then they are not exposed to shame; they are not branded. And what is shame or being branded to these wretches, who every day harden their souls in infamy, in this school of mutual perdition, where the most criminal are the most respected?

Such, then, are the consequences of the present system of penal punishments. Incarceration is looked upon as a boon—the galleys often sued for.

* * *

"Twenty years' imprisonment in the galleys! My God! my God!" reiterated the poor sister of Pique Vinaigre.

"But, Jeanne, be comforted. They will only give me my money's worth. I am too weak to be put to hard work. Though there are no manufactories of trumpets and wooden swords, as at Melun, they will give me some easy work.

They will employ me in the infirmary. I am not refractory. I am of an easy nature. I shall tell stories there, as I do here. I shall conduct myself so as to be adored by my commanders, esteemed by my companions; and I will send you carved cocoa-nuts and straw boxes, for my nephews and nieces; in short, the wine is drawn, and must be drank."

"If you had only written to me, that you were coming to Paris, I would have managed to conceal you, and to lodge you, till you had found work to do."

"I had intended to go to you, but I wished rather to arrive with full pockets; for I see, moreover, by your dress, that you do not keep your carriage. And, by the by, how are your children, and your husband?"

"Do not speak of him!"

"Always a rattling fellow, but still he is a good workman."

"He gives me much uneasiness. I had trouble enough of my own, without having those which your misfortunes cause me."

"How! your husband?"

"He left me three years ago, having sold all we had in the house, leaving me and my children without a penny, a straw mattress being all our furniture."

"You had not told me that?"

"To what purpose? It would only have vexed you."

"Poor Jeanne! how then have you managed, alone, and with three children?"

"Indeed, I have suffered much. I worked by the piece as a fringe-maker, as much as I could. My neighbours helped me a little, and took care of my children when I went out; and I, who have not often had a chance, was fortunate once in my life. But it did not avail me anything, on account of my husband."

"How was that?"

"My employer had often spoken of my troubles to one of his customers, and had told him how my husband had left me penniless, after selling all our furniture; and that, in spite of this, I worked with all my might to bring up my children. One day, on returning home, what do I find? My rooms new furnished, a new bed and linen for it was there. It was the charitable gift of my employer's customer."

"Excellent customer, my poor sister! Why did you not write to me, to let me know the misery you were in. Instead of spending my earnings, I should have sent you the money."

"Do you think I would have taken money from you—a prisoner?"

"Undoubtedly. I was boarded, lodged, and warmed, at the expense of Government. What money I earned was all profit. Knowing my brother-in-law to be a good workman, and you, both a good workwoman and manager, I felt quite easy, and kept adding to my hoard with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, doubtless; but he got spoilt by bad company. Thanks to this unexpected assistance, I summoned up my courage. My eldest girl began to earn something. We should have been happy, but for the grief of knowing that you were at Melun. The work went on. My children were neatly dressed; they hardly wanted for anything. This gave me good heart. At last I had been able to lay by thirty-five francs, when all at once my husband reappeared. I had not seen him for a twelvemonth. Finding me comfortably lodged, and well clothed, he, without ceremony, took my savings, installed himself in my rooms, would not work, got drunk every day, and beat me when I complained."

"The wretch!"

"That is not all. He brought home another woman with whom he lived, and lodged her in a closet in my apartment. I was compelled to suffer even this; and for the second time he began, little by little, to sell all I had. Foreseeing what was about to happen to me, I called upon a lawyer who lived in the house, and asked him what I ought to do, to prevent my husband from reducing me and my children to beggary."

"The answer was very plain, that you should turn your husband out of doors!"

"Yes; but it seems I had not the right to do so. The lawyer told me that my husband could dispose of everything, as *chief of the community*, and install himself in the house, without working, if he pleased, and that I must submit to it; that the circumstance of his having a mistress living under the same roof, gave me the right of demanding a separation of property, bed and board, as they call it—and this would be the more easy, as I had witnesses who had seen my husband beat me; that I could bring an action against him, but that it would cost me, at least, four or five hundred francs to obtain my separation. Only think, it is about as much as I can earn in a whole year. Where could I borrow such a sum? And then, borrowing is not the serious question!—you must pay it back again. Gracious! five hundred francs—and all at once? 'tis quite a fortune!"

"There is, however, a very simple way of saving up five hundred francs," said Pique Vinaigre, with a bitter smile. "It is to hang up one's stomach for a year, to live upon air all that time, and work just as hard as though you were well fed. It is astonishing the lawyer did not advise you to do that."

"You are always joking."

"I am not joking this time!" exclaimed Pique Vinaigre, indignantly; "for it is infamous, that the law should be too dear for poor people. Here you are, a good and worthy mother of a family, working with all your might to bring your children up honestly. Your husband is a confirmed, worthless rascal! he beats you, swears at you, pilfers from you, and spends at the wine-shop all your hard-earned money. You apply for justice, you ask for protection, that you may keep from the grip of an idle scoundrel, your own and your children's bread. The lawyers tell you: 'Yes, you are right; your husband is a good-for-nothing fellow; justice shall be done you, but that justice will cost you five hundred francs—almost as much as is necessary to keep you and all your children during a year.' Observe now, Jeanne; all this proves, as the proverb says, that 'There are only two classes of people in the world—those who are hanged, and those who deserve to be.'"

Alone and thoughtful, having no one whom she could address, Rigolette had not lost a word of the melancholy story of this poor woman, in whose misfortunes she already felt a lively interest. She determined to relate all she had heard to Rodolph, as soon as she should see him, feeling quite confident he would immediately assist her.

Being deeply interested in the melancholy fate of Pique Vinaigre's sister, Rigolette could not take her eyes off her, and was about to draw a

little closer to her, when, unfortunately, a fresh visitor came into the room, asked for a prisoner, who was sent for, and sat himself down upon the bench between Jeanne and the grisette. The latter, on seeing this man, could not restrain a gesture of surprise, almost of fear. She recognized in him one of the two bailiffs who had come to arrest Morel, upon the judgment obtained against the lapidary by Jacques Ferrand. This circumstance recalling to Rigolette the remorseless persecutor of Germain, redoubled her sorrow, which had been somewhat diverted from her mind by the touching and painful conferences between Pique Vinaigre and his sister.

Moving as far from her new neighbour as the extent of bench would permit her, the grisette leaned back against the wall, and gave herself up once more to her own afflicting thoughts.

"Look you, Jeanne," rejoined Pique Vinaigre, whose jovial and sarcastic looks had suddenly become gloomy; "I am neither strong nor courageous, but if I had happened to be there when your husband so tormented you, it would not have passed off so quietly between him and me. But you also were too easy with him."

"What would you have had me do? I was obliged to suffer what I could not prevent! As long as he found anything in the house to sell, my husband sold it, to go to the wine-shop with his mistress—everything, even to the Sunday dress of my little girl."

"But your daily wages—why did you give it to him? why did you not hide it from him?"

"I did hide it, but he beat me so much, that I was obliged to give it to him. But I should not have yielded to the blows so easily, had I not feared that he might injure me so seriously, that I might not be able to work for a long time. He might break an arm, thought I, and then what would become of me? Who would take care of—who would feed my children? If I should be obliged to go to the hospital, they would die of hunger. You will comprehend, brother, that I preferred giving my money to my husband, rather than to be beaten, and perhaps wounded, *that I might remain fit for work.*"

"Poor woman! Well, they talk of martyrs—it is you who have been a martyr!"

"And yet I never did harm to any one. All I wished for was to be capable of working, to support my husband and my children. But what would you have? In this world there are happy and unhappy people, as there are good and wicked ones."

"Yes, and it is perfectly astonishing how happy the good are! But, finally, you are altogether rid of this beggar of a husband?"

"I hope so; for he did not leave till he had sold my very bedstead, and the child's cradle. But when I think that he wished even to do worse ——"

"What is it you mean?"

"Though I say he, it was rather that wretched woman who urged him on; and that is why I mention it to you. One day, he said to me: 'When in a family there is a pretty girl fifteen years of age, like ours, how stupid it is not to profit by her beauty.'"

"Ha! now I understand you. After having sold the clothing, he would have sold the bodies!"

"When he said that, Fortuné, my blood forsook my heart, and I must do him the justice to say, that the reproaches which I heaped upon him, made him blush for shame. But as his wicked mistress chose to meddle in the dispute, and told me that my husband might do as he thought fit with his own daughter, I rated the strumpet so roundly, that my husband beat me; and since that scene, I have never set my eyes on them."

"Do you know, Jeanne, that there are many men condemned to ten years' imprisonment, who have not done so much to deserve it as your husband? They only rob strangers. Oh! he is a heartless vagabond, this husband of yours!"

"And yet at bottom he is not so wicked, brother; he has been led astray by his wild, drinking companions."

"Yes, he would not hurt a babe, but a girl grown up is quite another thing."

"Well, it can't be helped; we must e'en take life as we find it. My husband once gone, I no longer feared being lamed by an unlucky blow; I mustered courage once more. Not having wherewith to buy another mattress—for, first of all, one must eat and pay for one's lodging, and between both of us, my eldest daughter, my poor Catherine, and I, we could earn scarcely forty sous a day, my other two being too young to work—well, instead of a mattress, we slept upon a straw bed, gathered from the refuse of a packer's warehouse in the street we lived in."

"And I spent my prison earnings! I spent my prison earnings!"

"How could you help it? you did not know of my trouble, for I did not write to you about it. Well, we redoubled our labours, Catherine and I, poor child! If you knew how gentle, industrious, and good she is—always looking at me to see what I wish her to do, never complaining, and yet she has already seen enough of the misery of this world, although she is only fifteen years old: that consoles me for many sufferings. Look you, Fortuné, to have such a child ——" said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"She is a model of yourself, as far as I can judge. This is a consolation which, at least, you ought to have."

"I can assure you, I grieve much more for her than for myself. For the last two months, she has not ceased working for a moment. Once a week she goes out to wash in the boat of the Pont-au-Change, at three sous an hour, the little linen which my husband has left us. All the rest of her time she is chained to the house, like a poor dog. We must acknowledge that she has known misfortune too soon. I know that it must come sooner or later, but, at least, there are some people who enjoy two or three years of tranquillity. That which afflicts me a great deal in addition to all this, is, that I cannot assist you, my poor Fortuné, in any way. However, I will try ——"

"Oh, yes! do you think that I would accept of anything from you? On the contrary, instead of asking a sous for every pair of ears that listen to my stories, I will ask two; or they must do without the tales of Pique Vinaigre—and that will help you a little in your housekeeping. But now I think of it, why do you not go into furnished rooms? in that way your husband could not sell anything."

"Furnished rooms! But recollect there are four of us; they would ask us at least twenty sous a day. What should we have left to live upon? while, on the contrary, our present room costs us only fifty francs a year."

"Well, well; as you please," said Pique Vinaigre, with bitter irony. "Work till your fingers bleed, to get a little furniture about you;

[Interview between Rigolette and Germain.]

and then, as soon as you have laid by something, your husband will rifle you of all again, and some fine morning he will sell your daughter, as he has sold your clothes."

"Oh! as to that, he should kill me first. My poor Catherine!"

"He will not kill you, and he will sell your poor Catherine. He is your husband, is he not? he is the *chief of the community*, as the lawyer told you. As long as you are not legally separated, and as you have not even five francs to give for that, you must take it patiently. Your husband has the right to take your daughter from you, and when he pleases. If once he and his mistress determine on the ruin of this poor child, will she not be obliged to submit?"

"My God! my God! can such infamy be possible? There is, then, no justice!"

"Justice! justice!" cried Pique Vinaigre, bursting into a sardonic laugh. "It is like meat, it is too dear for poor people to have it. If they want to send them to Melun, to put them in the pillory, or to throw them into the galleys, that is quite another affair—that is a justice which they give them *gratis*. If they take their heads off, they do it *gratis*—always *gratis*. Tumble up and take your tickets, gentlemen," added Pique Vinaigre, in his showman's tone. "It is not ten sous, two sous, one sous, a centime, that they will cost you; no, gentlemen, they will cost you the small trifle of—nothing. They are within the reach of everybody. You have only to give your heads; the cutting and curling is at government expense. This is *gratis* justice. But that justice which would prevent a worthy mother of a family from being beaten, and despoiled by a scoundrelly husband, who wishes to make money of his daughter's shame, and can do so—that justice costs *five hundred francs*, and you must manage to do without it, my poor Jeanne."

"Oh! Fortuné!" said the unhappy mother, bursting into tears. "Your words wound me to the soul."

"It is because I am wounded also—I am wounded to the soul when I think of your fate, and that of your family—and in feeling that I can do nothing for you. I always appear to be laughing; but do not deceive yourself: I have two sorts of laughter, Jeanne, my gay laugh and my mournful laugh. I have neither the strength nor the courage to be wicked, passionate, or full of hatred, as the others—it always breaks out with me in words, more or less funny. My cowardice and my weakness have prevented me from becoming worse than I am. It required the singular chance of an isolated house, in which there was not a cat, much more a dog, to tempt me to commit the robbery. It fell out also, by accident, that the moonlight was magnificent—for in the dark, and alone, I have the devil's own fears."

"It is that which has always made me tell you, my poor Fortuné, that you are better than you think yourself; and, therefore, I trust that the judges will take pity upon you."

"Pity for me? for me—a liberated convict, who has committed a new crime? Yes, reckon upon that! After all, I shall bear them no ill-will; whether I am here, there, or elsewhere, is all one to me. Truly, Jeanne, you are in the right! I am not spitefully wicked; and those who are so I hate after my own fashion, and make game of them. I suppose that, from being so long accustomed to relate histories—in which, to please my auditors, I always manage that those who torment others, from sheer cruelty, receive in the end a famous thrashing—I have accustomed myself to have those feelings which I describe to you."

"Do they like such histories, those terrible people with whom you are, my poor brother? I should never have expected that."

"The deuce! If I were to begin telling them a story of a fellow who robs, or kills to rob, and is caught at last, and guillotined, they would not let me go through with it; but when a woman or a child is concerned, or, for instance, a poor weak devil like myself, who you might knock down by blowing upon, is pursued with extreme hostility by a blackbeard, who persecutes him for the mere pleasure of persecuting—FOR HONOUR, as they say—oh! then they dance with joy, when at the end of the story the blackbeard receives his pay. Hold: I have especially a story, called 'Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux,' which was the delight of the central prison at Melun, and which I have not yet related here. I promised it for this evening, but they will have to put a large sum into my contribution-box, and you shall profit by it; besides, I will write it out for your children. 'Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux' will amuse them, take my word for it; men might read it without blushing, so you can give yourself no uneasiness."

"In short, my poor Fortuné, what consoles me not a little is, that you are not so unhappy as others, owing to your disposition."

"If I were like one of the prisoners who belongs to our ward, I should bring some calamity upon myself. Poor fellow! I am very much afraid that before the day is through, he will bleed from some side or other. It is growing red-hot for him; there is some bad plot arranged against him for to-night."

"Good heavens! do they wish to injure him? Don't meddle with that, at least, Fortuné."

"I'm no such fool; I might catch some of the splashing myself: it was only that I happened to be walking about among them, that I heard anything about it. They spoke of gagging him, in order to stop his noise; and also, to prevent his execution from being seen, they wished to make a circle about him, while they were pretending to listen to some one who was reading a newspaper aloud."

"But why do they wish to maltreat him in that manner?"

"As he is always alone, and speaks to nobody, and looks as if he was disgusted with his companions, they imagine that he is a spy, which is a very foolish idea; for if he was a spy, he would thrust himself among them. But the secret cause of their hatred is, that he looks like a gentleman, and that is what offends them. It is the captain of the dormitory, who is called the *Ambulating Skeleton*, that is at the head of the plot. He is as furious as the devil after that poor Germain—that is the name of their black-beast. They must settle their own affairs; it's their own look out, and I can do nothing to help it. But you see, Jeanne, all this comes from being sad in prison; you are suspected at once, and I take good care not to place myself in suspicion's way. But look ye, my girl, we have chatted enough; go home and see if I am there. I am breaking in upon your time by keeping you here. As for myself, I have nothing to do but talk; but time is another sort of commodity with you. So good-bye. Come her occasionally; you know I shall always be glad to see you."

"A few moments more, my brother, I pray you."

"No, no! your children are waiting for you. I hope you have not told them that their dear uncle is boarding here."

"They believe that you are in the West Indies, as my mother did, formerly; so that I am able to speak to them about you."

"That is so much the better; but go away, make haste."

"Yes; but hear me, my poor brother: I am not rich, but I cannot leave you in your present condition; you must be so cold with no stockings, and that miserable vest: Catherine and I will make you some clothes. You may believe, Fortuné, that it is not the disposition to assist you, which is wanting."

"What! what clothes? I have trunks full of them! and as soon as my luggage arrives, I shall have enough to dress like a prince! Come, laugh a little, now! What, you won't laugh! Seriously, my girl, I won't refuse your offer, while waiting for Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux to fill my box, and then I will return you anything which you advance. Farewell, my Jeanne: when you come here again, I will forfeit the name of Pique Vinaigre, if I don't make you laugh. Now, go home; I have already kept you too long."

"But hear me—hear me, my brother!"

"Here, my brave fellow!" called out Pique Vinaigre, to the keeper, who was seated at the other end of the passage; "I have finished my *confab*, and should like to go back. I have chatted long enough."

"Ah! Fortuné, it isn't kind, for you to send me away in this manner."

"On the contrary, it is the kindest thing I can do for you at present. Come, good-bye! keep up your courage, and to-morrow morning, tell your children that you had a dream about their

uncle, who is in the West Indies, and that he asked you to kiss them. Farewell!"

"Farewell, Fortuné!" said the poor woman, with her face bathed in tears, as she saw her brother go back to the interior of the prison.

Rigolette, since the officer had taken a seat by her side, had been unable to overhear the conversation of Pique Vinaigre and Jeanne; but she had not removed her eyes from the poor sister, forming in her own mind the determination of learning her address, in order to make available her recommendation to Rodolph, as she had at first determined to do.

When Jeanne arose from the bench to leave the parlour, the grisette approached her timidly, and said: "Madame, a few moments since, I overheard you say, without intending to listen to you, that you were a fringe-maker."

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied Jeanne, somewhat surprised, but predisposed in favour of Rigolette by her charming face, and its benevolent expression.

"I am a dressmaker," said the grisette; "and as trimmings and fringes are now in fashion, I frequently have customers who inquire for them: I have thought it would be cheaper to apply to a manufacturer, and that I could pay you more than your employer does."

"It is true, mademoiselle; if I could purchase silk on my own account, I could realize a small profit. It is very kind in you to think of me. I cannot conceive why you take so much interest in me."

"Well, madame, I will speak to you frankly. I am waiting for the individual whom I came to see; having no one to converse with before that gentleman placed himself between us, I heard you—unintentionally, I assure you—speaking to your brother of your sorrows and of your children. I said to myself: 'Poor people should help one another.' The thought then occurred to me, that I could be useful to you in some respect, since you are a fringe-maker. If, indeed, what I have proposed suits you, here is my address. Give me yours, so that I may know where to find you, when I have any orders to give:" and Rigolette gave one of her cards to the sister of Pique Vinaigre. The poor woman, quite moved by the kindness of the grisette, said to her with an overflowing heart: "Your face did not deceive me, mademoiselle; and, excuse my vanity, there is a resemblance between you and my eldest daughter, and that was the reason that I looked at you so attentively when you first came in. I thank you. If you employ me, you will be pleased with my work, for I will do it faithfully. My name is Jeanne Duport, and I live in Rue de la Barillerie, No. 1."

"No. 1; that is not difficult to remember. Thank you, madame."

"It belongs to me to thank you, my dear mademoiselle. You are so kind to think of being useful to me. I cannot conceive the motive which moved you."

"It is very simple, Madame Duport," said Rigolette, with a charming smile. "Since I resemble your daughter's character, what you call my kindness ought not to surprise you."

"What a sweet girl you are, my dear mademoiselle! I confess that, thanks to you, I shall go home with a lighter heart than I anticipated, and we may perhaps meet at this place again, for I suppose that you come here, like myself, to visit a prisoner."

"Yes, madame," replied Rigolette, with a sigh.

"I hope that we shall meet again, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said Madame Duport, casting her eye upon the card.

"Farewell, Madame Duport."

"I know at last the address of that poor woman," thought Rigolette, as she resumed her seat upon the bench; "and I am very sure that M. Rodolph will take an interest in her, when he knows how unhappy she is; for he has always told me, that if I knew of any one very miserable, to apply to him:" and Rigolette awaited with impatience the conclusion of the man's conversation, who was seated next to her, in order to be able to send for Germain.

A few words upon the scene which has just transpired. We are unfortunately obliged to confess, that the miserable brother of Jeanne Duport had legitimate reasons for his indignation. His assertion that law was *too dear for the poor*, was the truth. The pleadings before the civil tribunals are enormously expensive, and beyond the means of the artisans, who find it difficult to support life upon their meagre wages.

Supposing that a mother, or father of a family, belonging to that class who are invariably sacrificed, wished to obtain a separation of bed and board. Suppose that there is no question as to legal right to such a separation—is it in their power to obtain it? No; for there is not a common workman who is able to spend four or five hundred francs, for the onerous formalities of such a decree: and yet, all his pleasures are centred in domestic life. The exemplary or the dissipated conduct of the head of a laborious family, is not a question of morality, but a question of bread. Does the fate of a wife like the one we have attempted to describe, deserve less interest than that of a wealthy lady, who suffers from the infidelity of her husband? Nothing is more worthy of compassion, than the griefs and trials of the heart. But when an unhappy mother finds the misery of her children added to those griefs, is it not monstrous that her poverty should place her beyond relief of the law, and deliver herself and family defenceless into the merciless hands of a cruel and dissolute husband? Such, however, is the case; and a felon in this respect, as well as in many others, may, in fact, impeach the impartiality of those institutions in the name of which he is sentenced. Is it necessary for us to speak of the dangers which result from justifying such acts? What will be the influence—what the moral authority of those laws, which are absolutely subordinate to a question of money? Should not civil as well as criminal justice, be accessible to all? When people are too poor to invoke the salutary and preservative benefits of a law, should not society itself secure the application of its provisions, out of respect to the honour and repose of families?

But let us leave this woman, who will, for life, be the victim of a cruel and worthless husband, because she is too poor to enforce, by law, the separation to which she is entitled. Let us now allude to the brother of Jeanne Duport. This liberated convict emerges from a den of corruption into the world; he has paid his penalty, he has liquidated his debt by expiation. What precaution has society taken to prevent his relapse into crime? Not any. Has it, by any charitable provision, rendered his return to virtue possible, in order that he may be *justly* punished severely, if he shows himself incorrigible? No; the contagious perversion of your jails is so universally known, so rationally dreaded, that he

who emerges from one of them, is an object of scorn and frightful aversion. However excellent he may be, he cannot find anywhere an employment. Besides, your vigilant *surveillance* follows him to small villages, where his past life becomes necessarily known, and where he will have no means of exercising that exceptionable industry often imposed upon the prisoner by the contractor of the central prisons. If the liberated convict has sufficient firmness to withstand temptation, he will surrender himself to some of those destructive trades which we have already mentioned—to the preparation of certain chemical ingredients, the manufacture of which decimates the operatives employed;* or, if he has sufficient strength, he can employ himself in quarrying stones in the forests of Fontainebleau, where the average duration of the operative is six years. The situation of a liberated convict is, therefore, more painful, more trying, encompassed with more difficulties, than it was previous to his first fault. He moves surrounded with obstacles and dangers; he is compelled to brave disgust, contempt, and often the most frightful misery. If he falls a victim to all these temptations to guilt, if he commits a second crime, you show yourselves a thousand times more severe than towards his first fault. This is a gross injustice, for it is the necessity which you have created, that forces him into this second crime. Yes; for it has been demonstrated, that your penetentiary system, instead of reforming, corrupts; instead of meliorating, degenerates; instead of healing slight moral diseases, it renders them incurable. The aggravated punishment which you inflict upon a second crime is, therefore, iniquitous and barbarous, since that repitition of guilt is forced upon the convict by your penal institutions. The terrible punishment which is hurled at those who repeat their offence, would be just and reasonable, if the tendency of your prisons was to purify and elevate those who are committed to them; and if, at the expiration of their term of sentence, a return to honesty was possible. If the reader is astonished at these contradictions in the law, what will be his surprise when he compares certain offences with certain crimes, either in respect to their inevitable consequences, or to the degrees of punishment inflicted for their commission? The conversation of the prisoner whom the officer came to visit, will present us with one of these afflicting contrasts.

* We have been assured, that means have been recently discovered, by which the lives of those condemned to these awful trades may be preserved. See Memoir descriptive of a new method of manufacturing white lead, by M. J. N. Gannal.

CHAPTER II.

MASTER BOULARD.

The prisoner who entered the parlour at the time Pique Vinaigre left it, was a man about thirty years of age, with a jovial and rubicund face, and of the middle size, which rendered his extraordinary corporosity the more remarkable. This fat and florid prisoner was enveloped in a warm, gray frock-coat, with pantaloons and gaiters of the same stuff, and a cap of red velvet, called *à la Perinet Leclerc*, and very warm and furred slippers. Although the fashion for wearing seals had long since passed away, from his gold chain dangled a goodly number of them, adorned with precious stones; and several rings shone on the red, coarse hands of this prisoner, who was called Master Boulard, a bailiff accused of an abuse of trust. The man who had called to see him was Pierre Bourdin, one of the officers charged with the arrest of Morel, the lapidary. Bourdin was shorter, and fully as corpulent as the bailiff, and modelled, according to his means, after his patron, whose style and magnificence he admired. Having, like his friend, a taste for jewellery, a superb topaz breast-pin adorned his shirt, and a long gold chain appeared and disappeared through the button-holes of his vest.

"Good day, my faithful Bourdin; I was sure you would be present at roll-call," said Master Boulard, joyfully, with a piping and effeminate voice, that contrasted singularly with his large body and broad, rubicund visage.

"What! fail at roll-call? I am incapable of it, general." It was by this familiar, and at the same time, respectful title, that Bourdin addressed the bailiff, under whose orders he served. The same military designation is frequently used by certain classes of artists and practitioners.

"It gives me pleasure to see that friendship is faithful to misfortune," said Master Boulard, with cordial gaiety; "and yet I must confess, that I was beginning to doubt your constancy, for it is now three days since I wrote to you, and no Bourdin appeared."

"My apology, general, would be a long story. Do you remember that dashing viscount of the Rue Chaillot?"

"Saint-Remy?"

"Precisely. You remember how he laughed at our arrest?"

"Yes, his frivolity was indecent."

"Malicorne and I would have been stupefied by it, were that possible."

"To stupefy you and M. Malicorne is not possible."

"Thank you, my general; but the fact is, that this gay viscount has increased his titles."

"Has he become a count?"

"No no! from a swindler he has become a thief."

"You don't say so!"

"They are following his tracks for some diamonds which he has stolen. And by the way, the jewels belonged to the artist who employed Morel, the lapidary, whom we were going to pounce upon in the Rue du Temple, when a tall fellow, with a black moustache, settled that starveling's bill, and was on the point of kicking down stairs Malicorne and myself."

"Oh! yes, yes! I remember, you related the affair to me, my poor Bourdin; it was a laughable scene! the best part of the whole was, that the old portress dashed on your backs a kettle-full of boiling soup."

"You may well say so, general; the kettle of the old witch broke at our heels, as we were running down stairs."

"Yes; but it will count up upon your report of services and wounds. But what has become of the dashing viscount?"

"I was telling you that Saint-Remy was pursued for theft, after he had duped his good-natured old father with the pretence of blowing out his brains. A police-officer, a friend of mine, who was aware that I had once been on the tracks of that fop, asked me if I couldn't put him on his footsteps again. I had learned too late, when the other writ was in our hands, that he was burrowed at the farm of Arnouville, and I went there after him, but the bird had flown from his nest."

"Besides, he *shelled out* the next day for

those drafts, thanks to some great lady, it is said."

"Yes, my general; but it is all the same thing. I know the nest where he had concealed himself, and he might have been hid in the same place a second time, and that is what I told my friend, the police-officer; and he proposed to me to volunteer as an amateur, and to conduct him to the farm: as I had nothing on hand, I accepted. 'Twas a mere pleasure excursion into the country."

"Did you find the viscount?"

"Not I! After we had wandered and searched the house, we were obliged to return as wise as we went; and this is the reason, general, why I have not come to receive your orders before."

"I was very certain that something imperious prevented you from obeying my request, my honest fellow."

"But can you tell me, without indiscretion, how the devil you happened to be caged here?"

"A set of rascally clowns, who pretend I have swindled them out of the paltry sum of sixty thousand francs—a mere trifle—accused me, and had me arrested for breach of trust; and have forced me to abdicate my office."

"That is unfortunate, general; shall we then no longer serve under your orders?"

"I am now under half-pay, my brave Bourdin."

"But who are these desperate enemies of yours?"

"The most savage of them is a liberated thief, who intrusted me with a note for seven hundred francs to collect, and for which it was necessary to commence a suit. I got possession of the money, and in consequence of a failure in some operations of mine, I squandered the sum, as I have many others before it; but the rabble barked and yelped after me so loud, that a writ was served on me, and here I am, no more nor less than a malefactor."

"It makes me sweat, general."

"The most curious part of the whole affair is, that the liberated thief wrote to me the other day, that the seven hundred francs was the sum which he had laid by for a rainy day, and that the day having come (what does the devil mean?), I would be responsible for any crimes which he might commit, to save himself from starvation."

"That's charming, upon my honour!"

"Is it not? Nothing more convenient than such an excuse for the rogue! Fortunately, the law does not allow of any such responsibility."

"After all, it is only of an abuse of trust of which you are accused, my general."

"Certainly! did you take me for a thief, Master Bourdin?"

"No, indeed, my general; I meant that there was nothing serious in the accusation. 'Tisn't enough to whip a cat for!"

"Do I look, my brave fellow, as if I were in despair?"

"Not at all—not at all. I never saw you in better case. Supposing you are condemned; it will only be two or three months' imprisonment, or twenty-five francs' fine. I know the code."

"And I am confident that I shall obtain permission to spend those two or three months very comfortably, in some hospital. I have one deputy under my thumb."

"In that case, you are safe."

"I cannot help laughing, Bourdin, at those fools who sent me here; they never will see a sous of the sum which they claim. To be sure, they have obliged me to give up my commission. It is a duty which I owed my predecessor, as you say. You see that those stupid fellows will be the turkeys of the joke, after all, as Robert Macaire says."

"I think just so, myself, general; they will be the sufferers, after all."

"But let me speak of the objects, my dear fellow, which induced me to send for you. It is an affair in which the ladies are concerned," said Master Boulard, with an affectation of mystery.

"General, you always were a rogue; what is to pay now? Rely upon me."

"I am particularly interested in a young actress, of the Follies Dramatiques. I pay her rent, and she repays me in love—at least, she makes me think so. But you know, my good fellow, the absent are often deceived; and I should like to know whether I am an exception to the rule—whether my Alexandrine—for that is her name—is faithful to me. She has applied to me for funds, and I do not like to be made a fool of. I should, therefore, like to know, before I shell out the coin, whether she deserves my generosity, by her constancy. I know there is nothing more stupid, more vulgar, than such fidelity; but it is a weakness, to which I confess that I am a victim. You would, therefore, confer a great favour upon me, my dear comrade, if you would keep an eye upon my lass, and, either by applying to the portress of Alexandrine, or by some other means, inform me what I am to believe."

"Enough, enough, my general," replied Bourdin, interrupting the bailiff: "you could not have applied to a more skilful man. I am accustomed to play the spy upon a creditor. Rely upon me. I shall know whether Mademoiselle Alexandrine erases anything from the contract—which does not seem to me to be very probable; for, without flattery, general, you are a handsome man, and too generous, not to be adored by the women."

"However handsome I may be, my dear Bourdin, you must consider that I am absent, and that it is a very serious set-off; in short, I rely upon you to ascertain the whole truth."

"You shall know all about it, I assure you."

"Ah! my dear comrade, how shall I express to you my gratitude?"

"Come, you are jesting, general."

"It is well understood, my brave Bourdin, that in this affair, your remuneration will be the same as in an arrest."

"My general, I will not suffer that. As long as I have been under your orders, you have always allowed me to spear the debtor to the quick, double and treble the costs of arrest; and you stood up for the costs, with as much obstinacy as if they had been your own."

"But, my dear comrade, this is an entirely different affair. It is now my turn; and I will not permit you ——"

"Allow me, general, to offer this information as a feeble proof of my gratitude; you will humiliate me, if you do not."

"Well, then, I will not contend with you about a point of generosity. Besides, your devotion will be a sweet reward for the freedom which I allowed you in our business affairs."

"That is the manner, general, in which I

wish that it should be understood. Can I not serve you in any other way? You must be very uncomfortable here—you, who think so much of the luxuries of life. You have private rooms, I hope?"*

"Certainly; and I arrived here just in season. I obtained the last vacant room. The others are in a part of the prison which they are repairing. I settled down very comfortably in my cell; and I am not very uncomfortably situated. I have a stove—I sent for a good arm-chair—I take three good long meals—I digest well, and I sleep well. With the exception of the trouble which Alexandrine gives me, I am not much to be pitied."

"But you, who are so fond of good living, must find the cooking here execrable."

"Was not the *restaurateur* who lives in this street, created, as one might say, for my exclusive benefit? I have opened an account with him, and he sends me excellent fare every day. And, by-the-by, since you wish to do me a favour, I wish you would ask that nice little Madame Michounean, who is no worm-eater, I tell you ——"

"Ah! rogue—arrant rogue as ever, my dear general!"

"Come, come, my dear comrade; none of your wicked jibes," said the thief, with a slight degree of affectation; "I am only a good customer and a good neighbour, nothing more. Ask Madame Michounean to put in my basket for to-morrow, a good pie, of pickled tunny fish, for it is now just the season for them; the dish will be good by way of variety, and it provokes drink also."

"An excellent idea."

"And let Madame Michounean send me a basket of claret, champagne, and Burgundy, like the last which she sent, and add to it two bottles of her 1817 brandy, and a pound of pure Mocha, just burnt, and recently ground."

"I will write down the date of the brandy, so as not to forget it," said Bourdin, pulling his memorandum-book from his pocket.

"And since you are so kind, my comrade, have the goodness to take a note to my lodgings, and ask for my eider-down coverlet."

"I will punctually execute all your commissions, my general. I am relieved from my anxiety about your living, but in your walks do you associate pell-mell with the bandits?"

"Yes; and it's a very gay and animated scene, I assure you. I leave my rooms after breakfast, and go, sometimes into one room, sometimes into another, and as you say, I mingle among the rabble; it is *Regence*, it is *Porcherons*; they seem to be a very honest set of fellows, and are very amusing. The most refractory among them are confined together, in what is called the Lion's Den. What gallows-faces they have! There is one fellow called the Skeleton, who is a very curious specimen, I assure you. I never saw a man like him."

"He has a curious name."

"He is so thin, so fleshless, that the name is well deserved; he is a frightful rascal, I assure you; he is the captain of his ward, and has just left the bagnio, since which he has committed a robbery and a murder. His last crime was so horrible, that he is confident that he will be sentenced to death, without mercy; but he don't care a snap for it."

"What a brigand!"

"All the prisoners here admire him, and tremble in his presence. I insinuated myself into his good graces at once, by giving him some cigars; so he has admitted me to his friendship, and is teaching me slang. I improve daily, I assure you."

"What a joke! my general learning slang from a skeleton!"

"I tell you, this is not such a bad place, after all; these fellows adore me! some of them even say *thou* to me! I don't keep myself at a distance, like a young fellow, called Germain—a poor beggar, who can't afford a private room, and who tries to affect disquiet, and to pretend that he is a great lord."

"He must have been delighted to meet with a man of your genteel appearance, to converse with, if he is so disgusted with the rest of them."

"Pshaw! he didn't appear to notice who I was; but even if he had, I should have frowned upon his advances. He is the *black beast*, the speckled bird of the prison; they will play him some devilish bad trick sooner or later, and I have no disposition, I assure you, to share the aversion which is felt for him."

"You are quite right."

"It would spoil my recreation; for my walk among the prisoners is actually a pleasant promenade, only, I cannot say that the brigands have a just estimate of my *moral* worth; they are not aware that I am merely accused of a breach of trust—a mere trifle among fellows of that stamp; so they look upon me as *small potatoes*, as Arnold says."

"Sure enough, compared with those desperate malefactors, you are."

"A lamb of innocence, my dear comrade. Be so obliging as not to forget my commissions."

"Depend upon me, my general: first, Mademoiselle Alexandrine; second, the fish pie and basket of wine; third, the 1817 brandy, the ground coffee, and the eider-down coverlet: you shall have all those. Do you wish for anything else?"

"Oh, yes! I have forgotten; do you know the residence of M. Badinot?"

"The attorney? yes."

"Well, please to inform him that I shall rely upon his kindness, to find a first-rate counsel to argue my cause, and that I won't scruple to pay him a fee of a thousand francs."

"I will see M. Badinot, depend upon it, general. I will attend to all your commands this evening, and to-morrow you shall receive everything for which you ask. Farewell, general; keep up your courage."

"Farewell, my comrade."

And the prisoner left the parlour on one side, while the visitor departed upon the other.

Let us now compare the crimes of Pique Vinaigre, the robber, with the offence of Master Boulard, the officer; examine the point from which each departed from virtue, and the temptations which led each to the commission of crime; compare, finally, the punishment which was in reserve for both these violators of the law. The one was discharged from prison, and, as a liberated felon, inspired everywhere disgust and suspicion. He was prevented from exercising the mortal trade to which he had devoted himself; even that last resource failed. He breaks his ban, returns to Paris, expecting to conceal, in that large city, the disgrace of his past life, and secure some means of livelihood.

* The accused, who can afford it, are allowed this privilege.

He arrives, exhausted with fatigue, and almost starved to death; he learns that money was deposited in a neighbouring house; he breaks open a window, forces a drawer, steals a hundred francs, and flies. He is arrested, thrown into prison, and will be tried and sentenced. For a second crime, fifteen or twenty years' imprisonment, and exposure in the pillory, is the penalty. This frightful punishment he deserves.

Property is sacred. He who, in the night-time, breaks open your door to steal your goods, should be visited with the whole vengeance of the law. It will be in vain for the guilty wretch to plead the want of labour, poverty, starvation, and perils innumerable, to which, as a liberated convict, he was exposed; the excuse will have no weight. The law has but a single eye. Society, for its safety and repose, has armed it with unlimited power, and requires it to visit audacious attacks upon property, with merciless severity. Yes; this miserable, despised, and dangerous thief—this desperate rascal, who has repeated his crime, deserves all the penalty which the law can inflict.

What, then, will that man deserve, who, intelligent, rich, and influential—invested, moreover, with an official character—has stolen, not for the purpose of clothing his nakedness, or of satisfying his hungry maw, but to tempt the chances of stock-jobbing, to adventure upon some speculation; who has not stolen a hundred francs, but a hundred thousand — a million? He has not stolen in the night, and risked his life by a burglary, but has robbed in the face of day, in the sight of everybody. He has not robbed a stranger, who committed his money to the safeguard of a lock, but a client, who has been compelled to rely upon the probity of a public officer, whom the law has appointed, and for whose confidence the law vouches. What punishment does he deserve, who steals—not a small sum to supply his necessities, but an enormous amount, to waste on his luxuries? Would it not be gross injustice to inflict upon him the same penalty which is inflicted upon the liberated convict, who was goaded to his crimes by hunger, poverty, and wretchedness? No, no, says the law; we must not inflict the same penalty upon a respectable man as upon a vagabond! 'Twould be a shame. What! compare a breach of trust to a felony? Disgraceful!

What answer will Master Boulard make, who perfectly agrees with the law? "In virtue of the power which my commission conferred upon me," he will say, "I have received certain sums, I have squandered every farthing. Am I a beggar, a penniless rascal? No! thanks be to God, I have still enough to live comfortably upon. I had higher and loftier aims than becomes a beggar. Provided with your money, I launched forth into speculations; I might have doubled and trebled the sum, if fortune had smiled upon me; but it proved otherwise, and I have lost as much as yourselves."

The law seems to say: "What has this gay, lively, off-hand defalcation—which happened in broad daylight — in common with burglarious forcing of locks, in the dead of night, with false keys, wrenches, and crowbars, and uncouth and felonious tools of that description, which are never employed, except by people of the lowest classes?" Crimes seem to change their character and their names, when perpetrated by that class of persons whom the law seems to take into special favour. When a miserable wretch steals a loaf of bread from a baker's shop, by breaking a window, or a chambermaid robs her mistress of a handkerchief or a louis, the crime is called a theft under aggravated circumstances, and the reprobate called before the Court of Assizes.

The proceeding is just, particularly in the case last mentioned. The servant who steals from his master is doubly guilty; his trust is, in a certain sense, fiduciary; he is one of the family; the house is open to him at all hours, and he basely betrays confidence reposed: it is that feature of his crime which the law visits with such deserved severity. Nothing can be more just or moral than its provisions in this respect. But let a sheriff, or a public officer, steal the money which you have been compelled to intrust to his official character, and it does not rank with a burglary in heinousness; it is not even compared with a theft by a servant; it is, in the eye of the law, no theft at all. That term is much too harsh, too disreputable, to apply to the offence; it is called an *abuse of confidence;* more decent and respectable in its signification; better adapted to the rank of the swindler, to his social situation, to the position in society of him who has committed this delinquency; it is not named by that severe and brutal appellation—crime.

Another important distinction is made: a crime is tried before the Court of Assizes, an abuse of confidence before the *correctionnelle* police. What a climax of equity is this! A servant steals a louis from his master—a famished man breaks a window to steal a loaf of bread—the law pronounces these offences crimes, and condemns the criminal before the Court of Assizes. A public officer squanders a million—it is called an abuse of confidence, and submitted to the police *correctionnelle.* In point of fact, common sense, morality, and reason, how is this frightful discrepancy in penalty justified? How does the domestic theft, upon which infamous punishment is inflicted, differ from an abuse of confidence, punished by the police *correctionnelle?* Is it because an abuse of confidence almost always carries in its train the ruin of families? What then is an abuse of confidence but a domestic theft, aggravated in a frightful degree, both by the consequences which follow, and by the fiduciary character of him who commits it? Is a burglarious theft more culpable than a theft from an abuse of confidence? Will you assert that the violation of his oath, by a public officer, is less censurable than the breaking open of a door? Yes, says the law.

Crimes are grave in proportion as they endanger the existence of families, private security, and public confidence; and yet these very crimes are punished with the mildest penalty. So that the more knowledge, intelligence, and consideration the guilty possess, the more indulgent the law; while the most terrible and disgraceful visitations of its power are reserved for those who, if they have not an excuse, have at least a pretext for their crimes, in their misery, want, and wretchedness. This partiality of the law is immoral, and criminally unjust. Strike without mercy, the poor who pilfer the goods of others; and smite with equal severity the public officer who abuses fiduciary relations. Let us hear no more those apologists who justify people who have squandered trust-funds in dangerous speculations, for reasons like the following: "My client does not deny that he has misappropriated

he money in question; he is also aware of what frightful distress an abuse of confidence may be the cause, that it has, in this case, plunged an honourable family into poverty. But what will you have? My client has been gifted with an enterprising mind; he is fond of the excitement of hazardous enterprises; and when he is once launched on the sea of speculation—when he is once smitten with the stock-jobbing frenzy, he forgets, instantly, that the property of his client does not belong to himself."

This is wonderfully consoling to those who have been robbed of their property, and singularly refreshing to those who are in a position to be so. How would an advocate be received in a court of assizes, who offered an analogous defence?

"My client does not deny that he forced open the secretary, and stole therefrom the sum in question. But what will you have? He has been gifted with a strong appetite, and a finished taste; he loves good dinners, adores women, is fond of comfort and luxury; and when he is once seized with this frenzy for pleasure, he makes no distinction between what is his own and what belongs to another."

We contend that there is an exact analogy between the thief and the defaulter; they both violate the law with the hope of gain; and they both deny what they have gained, in order to enjoy it hereafter. But let us return to our reflections.

We are desirous that, by legislative authority, an abuse of confidence by a public officer should be pronounced a theft; and that its minimum penalty should be the same with that of a theft by a menial, and its maximum the same as a burglarious entrance into a house. The fraternity to which the public officer belongs, should be made responsible for the sums which he has stolen in his character of officer.

There is, moreover, an explanation which may serve as a corollary; and after the facts which we are about to quote, all comment will be unnecessary. We will only ask, whether we live in a civilised or a barbarous community. We read in the *Bulletin des Tribunaux*, for February 17th, 1843, the following decision of a case, in which a bailiff, condemned for abuse of confidence, had appealed:—"The court adopt the view of the case held by the first judges. Whereas, the documents presented for the first time before this court by the accused, do not weaken nor controvert the facts established before the first judges. Whereas, it is proved that the accused, in his character as bailiff, has received certain sums of money belonging to his clients, and has replied to their demand for the same, by equivocation and falsehood; and, finally, has converted and squandered the same, and thus abused their confidence: we, therefore, declare him guilty of the delinquency punished by Articles 408 and 406 of the Penal Code. The court condemns to two months' imprisonment, and a fine of twenty-five francs."

A few lines below, in the same journal, for the same day, we read: "TWENTY YEARS' HARD LABOUR.—On the 13th of September last, a robbery and burglary were committed, during the night, in the house occupied by the brothers Bresson, wine-dealers, in the village of Ivry. It was discovered that a ladder had been placed against the wall of the house, and one of the shutters, on a window facing the street, forced by the vigorous burglar. The things stolen were less considerable in value than in number, consisting of old clothes, old sheets, worn-out shoes, and, to enumerate everything, two bottles of white absinth. These facts having been fully proved against Tellier, the accused, the attorney-general demanded that the full punishment of the law should be awarded, particularly as this was his second offence. The jury having brought in a verdict of guilty, on all the charges, without any extenuating circumstances, the court sentenced Tellier to twenty years' hard labour, and the pillory."

For the public defaulter, two months' imprisonment! for the recommitted convict, twenty years' hard labour, and the pillory!

Do not such facts speak for themselves? What serious reflections do they suggest!

* * *

Faithful to his promise, the old keeper had gone after Germain. When the bailiff Boulard returned to the interior of the prison, the door of the passage was opened. Germain entered, and Rigolette was only separated from her friend by the light wire grating.

CHAPTER III.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

THE features of Germain were not regular, but a more interesting face was seldom seen; his manners were *distingué*, his form genteel; his dress neat, but plain, consisting of grey pantaloons, and a black frock-coat, buttoned up to the neck. There were none of the marks of negligence and slovenly carelessness peculiar to prisoners, about him. His unsoiled hands showed the care which he devoted to personal cleanliness, and probably increased the aversion which the other prisoners bore towards him; for moral perverseness is almost always joined to physical negligence. His brown hair, curling naturally, was parted on the side, according to the fashion of the time, and fell low upon his pale and sad face; his fine blue eyes indicated great frankness and kindness of disposition, while his mild and melancholy smile expressed, at the same time, benevolence and habitual despondency; for, although very young, he had been the victim of severe trials. In one word, nothing could be more touching than the expression of patient resignation which was seated upon his brow; nothing could be more honest and upright than the heart which throbbed beneath. The cause of his arrest, separated, of course, from the slanderous accusations of Jacques Ferrand, proved the excellence of his disposition; the impropriety of which he had been guilty was suggested by the excited compassion and sympathy of his nature, and, although blameworthy, was certainly pardonable, when it is considered that, on the next day, the son of Madame Georges was certain of refunding the sum taken from the desk of the notary, for the purpose of saving Morel, the lapidary.

Germain slighty blushed when, through the grating, he discerned the charming and blooming countenance of Rigolette. According to the custom of the kind-hearted grisette, she affected great cheerfulness, in order to inspire her friend with courage; but she found it difficult to conceal the grief and emotion which she had experienced since she had entered the prison. She was seated upon the bench by the side of the grating, and held the straw basket in her hand. The old keeper, instead of remaining in the passage, kindly departed, to take a seat near the

stove, and soon fell asleep, in order to give Germain and Rigolette perfect freedom to converse about their own affairs.

"Let us see, Mr. Germain," said the beautiful grisette, placing her lovely face as near the grating as possible; "let me see whether I shall be pleased with your face or not. It is a little less sad, I think; but take care, take care, or I shall be obliged to scold."

"How kind you are, to come again to-day!"

"Again! That sounds like a reproach, I think."

"And ought I not to reproach you, for doing so much for me, who can repay you in no other way than by thanks?"

"You are wrong, sir; these visits give me as much pleasure as they can you, and the thanks are, rather, due from me. I have caught you there, uncourteous Germain, and I have a great mind to punish you for your unkind thoughts, by refusing to deliver what I have brought you."

"You are spoiling me with attentions; but I thank you from the bottom of my soul. You must excuse me for repeating so often that word which offends you; but you give me no chance to say any other."

"You do not know, in the first place, what I have brought you."

"Well, suppose I do not."

"I think you are very polite."

"Whatever it may be, it is some new proof of your kindness, which will fill my heart with gratitude, and with ——"

Germain could not finish the sentence, but hung down his head, abashed.

"With gratitude—and with what beside?" asked Rigolette, blushing in her turn.

"And with regard, devotion," stammered Germain.

"And why not add, 'respect,' as you would at the bottom of a letter? You are deceiving me; you meant something besides 'regard, devotion,' for you stopped suddenly."

"I assure you ——"

"You assure me, you assure me; I see through the grating, that you are blushing. Am I not your little friend, your good companion? why do you hide anything from me? Be frank, and tell me everything," added the grisette, timidly; for she only waited an opportunity of confessing to Germain how much she loved him—an honest, virtuous love, which the misfortunes of Germain had inspired in her bosom.

"I assure you," said the prisoner, with a sigh, "that I hide nothing from you."

"For shame, false man!" said Rigolette, stamping her little foot; "do you see this large cravat of white woollen, which I have brought for you?" and she drew it from the basket; "in order to punish you for your dissimulation, you shall not have it. I knitted it for you, myself; for it must be cold in those large prison yards, and I thought it would be a warm and comfortable covering for your neck."

"How ——"

"Yes, yes! you are very much troubled with the cold," said the grisette, interrupting him hastily; "I remember it very well, and you tried to prevent me from putting more wood into the stove when you passed your evenings with me: you see, I have a good memory."

"Mine also is, alas! too good," said Germain, in an agitated voice, and he passed his hands over his eyes.

"Come, you are going to be sad again; I positively forbid it!"

"How can I avoid being moved to tears, when I think of all that you have done for me since my imprisonment here? and this new attention of yours evinces such great kindness! Do I not know that you encroach upon your sleeping hours, in order to find time to visit me, and that for my sake you impose excessive labour upon yourself?"

"That is your way; come, pour out the flood of your pity upon me, for occasionally taking a pleasant walk to visit my friends; it is really a great hardship for one who likes nothing better than walking, and looking into the windows of the shops on the way."

"Especially on a day so stormy and blustering as the present!"

"That is an additional reason for going out; you cannot conceive of the variety of droll faces with which one meets—some hold on to their hats with their hands; others, with umbrellas that look like tulips, grin in the most laughable manner, while the rain drives into their faces. My walk this morning was a perfect comedy all the way; I thought I should make you laugh in telling you about it, but you are determined to keep your face as grave as it can be made."

"'Tis not my fault, Rigolette; pardon me, I pray you, but the impressions you have made upon me are of too serious a nature to move my laughter; you know that my happiness never exhibits itself in gaiety. I cannot help it."

Rigolette did not wish to reveal, that, in spite of her cheerful tattle, she shared the emotions of her companion; and she changed the conversation by hastening to say: "You are always saying, 'I cannot help it;' but there are a thousand things which you can help, that you will not do, though I have urged and entreated you."

"What do you mean?"

"Your obstinate refusals to treat with any kind of courtesy the other prisoners, your determination not to speak to them. The keeper just told me, it would be for your interest to make an effort to be on more friendly terms with them; I am sure you do nothing and say nothing to conciliate them, and you will excite the horrible men to do you some injury."

"But you cannot conceive of the horror with which they inspire me; and you are not aware of the personal reasons which I have for avoiding and detesting them, and those like them."

"I believe I do know the reasons. I have read those papers which you sent me to collect when you were first imprisoned, and I learned the dangers to which you were exposed on your arrival at Paris, in consequence of your refusal in the provinces to become a confederate in the crimes of the man who had brought you up, and that the last snare which he laid for you, forced you to leave the Rue du Temple, informing me alone of the place where you intended to reside; and in those papers, also, I read something else," said Rigolette, blushing, and casting down her eyes; "I read that ——"

"What you never would have known," exclaimed Germain, quickly, "if this misfortune had not occurred. But I beg of you to be generous, and forgive my folly—forget that, in happier days, I indulged such rash dreams."

Rigolette had attempted, for a second time, to draw from Germain a confession of his love, by alluding to the passionate and tender thoughts which he had formerly addressed to her; for, as

we have already said, from his first acquaintance with her, he had been inspired with a strong and ardent love. But, in order to enjoy the intimacy of his pretty neighbour, he had concealed that love from her under the disguise of friendship. Becoming, by misfortune, still more diffident and timid, he could scarcely conceive that Rigolette could entertain any love for a prisoner, branded with terrible accusations, and that she merely was displaying that sisterly affection which she had felt for him before his disgrace. The grisette, perceiving how imperfectly she was understood, smothered a sigh, and waited for a better opportunity to unveil to Germain the recesses of her heart. She continued, with embarrassment: "I certainly understand that the society of those wicked people inspire you with horror; but that is not a sufficient reason for braving dangers that might be avoided."

"I assure you, that in order to follow your advice, I have several times attempted to address those among them who appeared to me to be the least criminal; but if you knew what language they use—what men they are!"

"It must, indeed, be terrible."

"What is still more distressing, is to perceive that I am accustoming myself, by degrees, to the frightful conversation which I am forced to hear during the whole day. Yes; I listen now, with mournful apathy, to the horrid tales which, during the first days of my imprisonment, filled me with indignation; so that I begin to feel less confidence in myself," he exclaimed, with bitterness.

"What do you say, M. Germain?"

"By living constantly in such society, the mind, at length, accustoms itself to criminal thoughts, in the same manner as the ear becomes habituated to the vulgar words which it constantly hears. Yes; I can now easily comprehend, that a person may enter this place innocent, and leave it corrupt!"

"Yes, but not you—not you!"

"Yes, myself; and others, a thousand times better than myself. Alas! those who, before our trial, condemn us to such infamous society—can they be ignorant of its corrupt tendency? Are they ignorant that we breathe a contagious air, fatal to honour?"

"I beseech you, do not speak these words; you wound my feelings."

"You asked me the cause of my increasing despondency, and I have told it to you. I did not wish to reveal it; but I have but one way of repaying your compassion for me."

"My compassion—my compassion!"

"Yes; and that way is, to conceal nothing from you. I confess to you, with terror, that I am not the same man—I do not recognise myself. In vain I despise and avoid those wretches; their presence and contact has an influence upon me, in spite of myself. It seems as if they possess the fatal power of vitiating the atmosphere in which they live; it seems to me that I feel the corruption reaching my soul through every pore; if I were pardoned for the fault which I have committed, the sight and the society of honest people would fill me with confusion and shame. I am not yet so hardened, that I enjoy the sight of my companions; but I have arrived at this point—that I dread the day, when I shall find myself again in the midst of honourable people; and the reason is, that I am conscious of my weakness."

"Of your weakness!"

"Of my cowardice."

"Of your cowardice! what unjust ideas you entertain of yourself!"

"Is it not cowardly and culpable, to trifle with our duties and with honesty?—that I have done. And——"

"You—you!"

"Yes, I have done it. When I first entered here, I conceived fully the magnitude of my offence, however excusable it may be. It now appears to me less, by constantly hearing those thieves and murderers speak of their crimes with cynical jests and ferocious pride. I even surprise myself, occasionally, in envying their audacious indifference. I even rail at myself for torturing my mind with a fault, which is so insignificant compared with their crimes."

"You are right: your action, far from being censurable, was praiseworthy. You were confident that you could return, the next morning, the sum which you took only for a few hours, for the purpose of saving a whole family from ruin, perhaps from death."

"It makes no difference in the eyes of the law; and in the eyes of honest people, it is a theft. It is doubtless less criminal to steal with such an intention, than with some baser motive; but it is a fatal symptom to be obliged to compare oneself with people of a mean character, in order to justify yourself in your own eyes. I can no longer compare myself with people without stain: I am already reduced to compare myself with the degraded beings with whom I associate; so that I perceive that my conscience becomes harder. Should I commit a theft to-morrow, without the certainty of being able to restore the sum, which I might have stolen with a praiseworthy motive—and even if I stole it through cupidity—I might even then think myself innocent, compared with a man who commits a murder in order to steal; and yet, at this hour, there is as much difference between myself and an irreproachable man, as there is between myself and a murderer. Because there are beings a thousand times more degraded than I am, my degradation will decrease in my estimation. Instead of being able to say, as formerly: 'I am as honest as the most upright man;' I shall console myself by saying, that I am the least degraded among the reprobates with whom I am destined to live for ever."

"For ever! but you will leave this place!"

"It matters not. Although I may be acquitted, these people know me; and when I and they leave the prison, they will address me as an old jail companion. If people are ignorant of the precise accusation which leads me to the assize, these wretches will make it public. You see, then, clearly, that cursed and indissoluble ties attach me to them. Whereas, if I had been shut up alone in a cell until the day of my sentence, unknown to them as they would have been unknown to me, I should not have been assailed by those fears which may paralyze the best resolution. Alone, face to face with the memory of my fault, it would have increased rather than have diminished in my estimation. The more serious it appeared to me, the more severe would have been the expiation I should have imposed upon myself for the future. The more reason I should have for soliciting pardon, the greater would have been my efforts to do good in my humble sphere; for a hundred good actions are necessary to expiate a bad one. But can I even think of expiating that which, at this

hour, scarcely causes me a solitary pang? Yes! I feel that I am obeying an irresistible influence, against which I have for a long time struggled with all my might. I have been educated for evil purposes, and I begin to yield to my destiny. After all, isolated as I am, without relatives, without friends, what consequence is it whether my destiny ends honestly or criminally? And yet, my motives were good and pure. For the very reason that they wished to make of me an infamous man, I said to myself: 'I have never failed in honour, and to accomplish it has been more difficult for me than for any other person.' To-day, to-day, alas! it is frightful!" exclaimed the prisoner, with sobs so moving, that Rigolette could not restrain her tears. The countenance of Germain, moreover, expressed the most distressing sorrow; and sympathy could not be withheld from an upright man, struggling against the attacks of a fatal contagion, whose scrupulous conscience exaggerated the dangers, which were sufficiently threatening without being magnified.

Yes, threatening danger!

We never shall forget those words of a man of singular intelligence, to which an experience of twenty years spent in the government of prisons gave so much authority: "Admitting that a person unjustly accused, enters a prison perfectly pure, he will always leave it less honest than when he entered it. What might be called the first bud of honour, disappears in that corroding atmosphere."

We must, however, say, that the probity of Germain had long struggled victoriously, and that he rather dreaded the approach than actually suffered from the disease. His fear of seeing his fault diminish in his own eyes, proves that he was keenly alive to its enormity; but the trouble, the fears, the doubts, which cruelly agitated that honourable and generous mind, were, nevertheless, alarming symptoms. Guided by the correctness of her judgment, by her feminine sagacity, and the instincts of her love, Rigolette divined what we have just stated. Although perfectly convinced that her friend had not yet lost anything of his nice sense of honour, she feared that, in spite of the excellence of his character, he might one day become indifferent to what now so cruelly tormented him.

Rigolette, drying her tears, and addressing Germain, whose forehead was resting against the grating, remarked to him, in a plaintive, serious, and almost solemn voice, that he did not yet know her.

"Listen to me, Germain: however poorly I may explain myself—for I cannot speak as well as you—be assured that I will say that which is true and sincere! In the first place, you were wrong in complaining of being solitary and abandoned."

"Oh! do not suppose that I can ever forget the pity that you have shown for me."

"Just now, I did not interrupt you, when you spoke of *pity*, but since you repeat the word, I would inform you, that it is not pity alone that I feel for you. I will endeavour to explain it to you as well as I can. When we were neighbours, I loved you as a brother; as an agreeable companion. You rendered me little services, which I reciprocated. You permitted me to participate in your amusements on Sundays; and I endeavoured by my gaiety and gentility, to show my thanks. On that point we were quits."

"Quits! Oh! no! I——"

"Let me have a chance to speak. When you were obliged to leave the house in which we lived, your departure gave me more pain than that of any of my other neighbours."

"Can it be possible?"

"Yes: because the others were thoughtless creatures, to whom I was certainly indebted less than to you. And besides, they were not satisfied in becoming my companions, until I had repeated to them a hundred times, that they could not be otherwise; while you, you imagined at once, what our position towards each other would be. Notwithstanding that, you spent with me all your spare time; you taught me to write; you gave me good advice, somewhat serious, perhaps, but nevertheless, good: in fact, you were the most devoted of all my neighbours, and the only one who asked nothing in remuneration on account of the trouble. That was not all: on leaving the house, you gave me a strong proof of confidence, in intrusting so important a secret to a young girl like me. Faith! it really made me proud! Then again, after I was separated from you, I thought of you oftener than I did of my neighbours. What I tell you is true! You know that I never lie!"

"Can it be possible, that you made such a distinction between myself and others?"

"Certainly, I did. If I had not done so, I should have had a bad heart. Yes, I said to myself: 'There is no one better than M. Germain; only, he is rather serious. But never mind: if I had a friend who wished to get married for the purpose of being comfortable and happy, I should certainly advise her to marry M. Germain, for she would have a paradise of a home.'"

"You think of me for another?" said Germain, sadly.

"Most truly! I would have been delighted to have seen you married happily, loving you as I did, as a companion. You see that I am frank, and that I tell you everything."

"And I thank you, from the bottom of my soul! it is a consolation for me to learn, that among all your friends, I was the one you most preferred."

"Well; such was the state of things when your misfortune happened. It was then that I received that kind letter, in which you informed me of that which you call your fault. Fault! I, as unlearned as I am, consider it a beautiful and kind action. It was then, that you requested me to go after those papers, which informed me that you had always loved me, without daring to tell me so. These papers in which I read"—and Rigolette could not restrain her tears—"that thinking of the future, that sickness or want of work, might afflict me; you had left me—in case of your sudden death, which you had reason to fear—you left me the little that you had earned, by the means of your labour and economy."

"Yes; for if during my life, you had fallen sick, or been unable to obtain work, would you not rather have applied to me than to any other? I thought you would. Oh! tell me! tell me! was I not right in thinking so?"

"That's all very plain: to whom else would you have wished me to apply?"

"Oh! you do not know how pleasing such words are; what consolation they are in my sorrow!"

"I cannot explain to you what I experienced on reading—what a sad word!—that *will*, every line of which contained a remembrance of me, or

a thought of my future happiness; and yet I was not to receive these proofs of your affection, until you had ceased to exist. Indeed, what do you wish? After such generous conduct, are you surprised that love should come all at once? Is it not natural that it should be so? Is it not, M. Germain?"

The young girl spoke these last words so innocently, and in such an affecting and frank manner, while casting upon M. Germain a tender look from her large, black eyes, that the latter, at first, could scarcely comprehend her meaning, so far was he from believing that Rigolette loved him. The words, however, were so emphatic, that their echo rang in the very depth of the prisoner's soul. He blushed, and turned pale alternately, and then said: "What do you say? Oh! my God! I fear that, perhaps, I am deceiving myself. I——"

"I say that, from the first moment when I saw you so kind towards me, and when I saw you so unhappy, I loved you otherwise than as a companion; but now, if one of my friends should wish to marry," said Rigolette, between smiles and blushes, "I would, by no means, advise her to marry you, M. Germain."

"You love me? love me?"

"It is absolutely necessary that I should tell you of my own accord, since you would not ask me."

"Can it be possible?"

"It was not my fault that you did not understand, after being put twice upon the track. No, the gentleman would not take a hint, but forced me to make all these confessions to him. It is unfortunate, perhaps; but since I have only you to scold me for my assurance, I do not feel much alarmed. And then," said Rigolette, in a more serious tone, and with affectionate tenderness: "Just now you appeared to be so heart-broken and desponding, that I could no longer restrain myself. I was conceited enough to believe that this avowal, made with frankness, and from the bottom of my heart, would prevent you from being unhappy hereafter. I said to myself: 'Until now, I have been unsuccessful in my efforts to distract and console him; my dainties have taken away his appetite; my gaiety has made him weep; this time at least——' But heavens! what is the matter with you?" said Rigolette, on seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "How cruel you are! whatever I do, whatever I say, you will continue to be unhappy! Is it not both wicked and selfish to act so? One would suppose, that no one but yourself suffered on account of your sorrow."

"Alas! what misery is mine!" cried Germain, with despair. "You love me, now that I am no longer worthy of you!"

"No longer worthy of me? There is no good sense in talking so. It is the same as though I had said, that I was unworthy of your friendship, because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have been a prisoner as well as yourself; but am I a less honest girl on that account?"

"But you were thrown in prison because you were a poor, unprotected child; while I—oh! my God! what a difference!"

"Well; as to the prison, we shall never have cause to reproach ourselves. It is I, rather, who am the most ambitious; for in my present state, I ought not to think of marrying with any other than a workman. I am a foundling; I possess nothing but my little room and good resolutions; and yet I have boldly offered myself to you as a wife."

"Alas! heretofore, such a lot would have been the dream, the happiness of my life; but now, while resting under this infamous accusation, should I take advantage of your noble generosity, and of that pity for me which has perhaps misguided you? No, no!"

"But, my God! my God!" cried Rigolette, with melancholy impatience, "I tell you that it is not pity that I feel for you, but love. I think of none but you; I neither sleep nor eat; your sad and sweet countenance follows me everywhere. Is that pity? At this moment, while you are speaking to me, your look, your voice, reaches my heart. There are a thousand things in you that now please me to distraction, which before I did not remark. I love your face—I love your eyes—I love your form—I love your mind—I love your kind heart. Is that pity still? Why, after having loved you as a friend, I now love you as a lover, I do not know. Why I was so foolish and lively when I loved you as a friend, I do not know. Why my feelings are so swallowed up in you since I love you as a lover, I do not know. Why I have waited so long, without finding that you are at once beautiful and good, and that I love you with both my eyes and my heart, I do not know; or rather, if I do know, it is because I have discovered how much you love me, without telling me so, and how generous and devoted you are. Since then, love has exhibited itself in my heart and eyes, as the tear shows itself when we are affected."

"Really, it appears like a dream to hear you talk so!"

"And as for me, I never would have believed that I should have dared to say all this; but your despair has forced me to it. Now, sir, that you know that I love you as my friend, as my lover, as my husband, will you still call it pity?"

The generous scruples of Germain fell for an instant before this bold and innocent confession. An unhoped-for joy delighted him in his melancholy reflections.

"You love me!" he cried; "I believe you. Your accent, your look, confesses all to me. I will not ask myself why I have merited such happiness: I will surrender myself blindly to it. My life—my whole life will never enable me to recompense you. It is true that I have suffered much, but this moment effaces everything."

"At last, then, you are consoled. Oh! I was very sure that I should finally succeed!" cried Rigolette, in a transport of ecstatic joy.

"In the midst of the horrors of a prison, and when everything had conspired to oppress and overwhelm me, that such felicity——"

Germain could not finish. The thought itself recalled to his mind the reality of his position; his scruples for a moment forgotten, returned with more cruel force, and he continued in a desponding tone: "But I am a prisoner; I am accused of theft; I shall be perhaps convicted and disgraced; should I accept your valorous sacrifice? should I profit from your generous devotion? Oh! no, no! I am not base enough for that."

"What do you say?"

"That I shall be condemned, perhaps, to a life of years in prison."

"Well," continued Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "it will be seen that I am an

honest girl, and they will not refuse to marry us in the chapel of the prison."

"But perhaps I shall be imprisoned at a distance from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you: I will establish myself in the city where you are; I will obtain work, and I will come and see you daily."

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me more than all, do you not?"

"How can you ask me?"

"Well; what difference will it then make to you? Far from being disgraced in my eyes, I shall look upon you as a martyr to your kind heart."

"But the world will accuse you; the world will condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world! You are my world, and I yours. Let them talk."

"But suppose, on leaving the prison, my life should be precarious, wretched, repugnant to all? Suppose I should not find employment? Is it not horrible to think of? Then, if this corruption, this disgrace, which I so much dread, should have its influence over me, what a future for you!"

"You will never become corrupt—no; for now that you know that I love you, such knowledge will ever give you power to resist bad examples; you will think that even then, after leaving prison, when all repulse you, your wife will welcome you with love and gratitude, under the firm conviction that you have remained an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not? It astonishes myself. I do not know where I have picked up everything that I say to you. It must be, I think, from the very bottom of my soul, and that ought to convince you. If it does not; if you disdain an offer which is made to you with all my heart; and you do not desire the love of a poor girl, who ——"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with passionate ardour: "Well, I accept—I accept. Yes; I feel that there are times when it is cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices. It is doing an unworthy action. I accept, noble, courageous girl!"

"Are you in earnest, really in earnest, this time?"

"On my oath, I am. And besides, you told me something which struck me forcibly—which gave me the courage that I wanted."

"What happiness! and what did I tell you?"

"That on your account I should hereafter remain an honest man. Yes; with such a thought, I shall have the power of resisting the detestable influences that surround me. I will brave the contagion, and be enabled to preserve worthy of your love, the heart that is yours."

"Ah! Germain! how happy I am. Whatever I may have done for you, I feel now fully recompensed!"

"And, further; although you excuse my fault, I shall not forget its importance. My task in the future will be doubled—to expiate the past, and merit the happiness which I owe to you. To effect that, I will do good; and, however poor one may be, the occasion is never wanting."

"Alas! it is true. There are always those to be found more unfortunate than oneself."

"For want of money ——"

"We will give tears, such as those I gave for the poor Morels."

"It is holy alms. *The charity of the soul is more precious than that which gives bread.*"

"Then you accept, and will not retract?"

"Oh, never! never! my friend—my wife. Yes, my courage returns. It appears as though I had awakened from a dream. I no longer doubt myself. I deceived myself; happily, I deceived myself. My heart would not beat as it now beats, if it had lost its noble energy."

"Oh! Germain, how beautiful you are, while speaking thus! How much you encourage me; not for myself, but for yourself. Now you will promise me, will you not, now that you have my love as your protection, that you will no longer fear to speak to these wicked men, that their anger may not be excited against you?"

"Be not uneasy. On seeing me sad and depressed, they accused me, without doubt, of being a prey to my remorse; but, on seeing me proud and joyous, they will believe me to be under the influence of their wickedness."

"It is true: they will not suspect you, and I shall feel easy. But, no imprudence, now that you are mine. Remember, I am your little wife."

At this moment, the keeper moved, as though awakened.

"Quick! quick!" said Rigolette, in a low tone, and with a smile full of grace and modest affection; "quick, my husband; give me a pretty kiss upon my forehead through the grating; it shall be our betrothment."

And the blushing young girl rested her forehead against the iron grating, while Germain, deeply affected, moistened with his lips her fair, white brow. A tear, like a humid pearl, rolled down the prisoner's cheek—what an affecting baptism of this chaste, sad, and charming love!

"Oh! already three o'clock!" said the keeper, rising; "and the visitors ought to have left at two. Come, my dear mademoiselle," added he, addressing the grisette; "it's a pity, but you must leave."

"Oh! thanks! thanks to you, sir, for having allowed us to talk so long, alone. I have given Germain good courage; he will no longer appear so sad, and then he will have no more reason to be afraid of his wicked companions, will he, my friend?"

"Do not be alarmed," said Germain, smiling; "in future, I will be the gayest in the prison."

"In which case," said the keeper, "they will cease to notice you."

"Here's a cravat, that I have brought Germain, sir," said Rigolette; "must I deposit it in the receiving-room?"

"It is usual to do so; but, after all, since I have departed from the regulations, a little thing more or less won't do any harm—come, finish the day; give your present to him quickly, with your own hands;" and the keeper opened the door of the grating.

"The good man is right; the day shall be finished," said Germain, receiving the cravat from the hands of Rigolette, which he squeezed tenderly. "Adieu, for a short time. Now, I no longer fear to ask you to come and see me, as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise you. Good-bye, Germain."

"Farewell, my good little friend."

"Don't fail to use my cravat, for fear of the cold; it is so damp here."

"What a beautiful cravat! When I think that you made it for me, I will wear it constantly," said Germain, pressing it to his lips.

"Ah! now I hope that your appetite will return. Shall I cook that nice little dish for you?"

"Certainly; and this time I will do it honour."

"Be easy, then, M. Gourmand; you shall tell me how you like it. Good-bye, again. Thanks to you, M. Keeper, I leave, to-day, very happy and very much encouraged. Adieu, Germain."

"Adieu, my little wife, for a short time."

"Adieu, my dear."

A few moments afterwards, Rigolette, having put on her over-shoes, and taken her umbrella, left the prison with a lighter heart than when she entered it.

During the interview between Germain and the grisette, other scenes had transpired in the court-yard of the prison, whence we will conduct the reader.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LION'S DEN.

In the general appearance of a huge house of detention, constructed in every particular, as respects comfort and salubrity, that humanity calls for, offers nothing to the view that is peculiar, the sight of the prisoners causes a contrary impression. A feeling of sadness and pity is generally occasioned on finding ourselves in the midst of an assemblage of female prisoners, and on reflecting that these unfortunate creatures are forced into the perpetration of evil, less by their own will, than by the pernicious influence of the man who first led them astray. And then, again, the most criminal of these women, retain in the depths of their souls, two holy ties, that the violent straining of the most headlong and depraved passions never entirely sever—Love and Maternity.

To speak of love and maternity, is to admit, that within these miserable beings, a delicate and soft glimmering can yet lighten here and there the black darkness of deep corruption. But among men, such as prisons make them, and cast them back into the world, there is nothing of the kind. It is crime from a solitary fountain. It is a block of brass which only reddens in the fire of infernal passions. The sight of prisoners who encumber these prisons, also occasions, at first, a horrible and frightful shuddering. Reflection alone recalls thoughts most compassionate, but of great bitterness. Yes, of great bitterness; for we reflect that the peculiar population of these jails and bagnios, that this bloody harvest of the executioner, germinates from the miry soil of ignorance, misery, and beastliness.

If the reader would experience this first impression of horror and fright, of which we speak, let him follow us into the *Lion's Den*. One of the courts of La Force is so called.

There are assembled those prisoners who are considered the more dangerous from their past crimes, or on account of the ferocity or gravity of the accusations that rest against them. Nevertheless, it had been found necessary, on account of the urgent work that was going on in one of the buildings of La Force, to add temporarily to their number many other prisoners. The latter, although equally amenable to the Court of Assizes, were almost men of honesty, compared with the usual tenants of the Lion's Den.

The cloudy and rainy sky, cast a gloomy shade upon the scene we are about to depict. It occurred in the centre of a vast quadrangular yard, surrounded by high white walls, pierced here and there by a few grated windows. At one end of this yard, was a narrow wicketed door; at the other end was the entrance to the sitting-room—a large paved hall—in the centre of which was a furnace surrounded by wooden benches, upon which were lazily extended several prisoners, who were consorting together.

Others, preferring exercise to repose, were walking in close file, four or five deep, with arms locked. The sombre and energetic pencil of Salvator, or of Goya, is required to enable us to sketch faithfully, the various specimens of moral and physical ugliness there exhibited; or to paint, in all its hideous variety, the costume of these wretches, who were mostly covered with the most miserable garments; for being only *attainted*, or otherwise *supposed innocent*, they were not clad in the uniform dress of the central prisons. Some, however, were it; for, on entering the prison, their rags were so tattered and infected, that after the usual bath,* they had been furnished with the cap and course grey pantaloons of the condemned.

A phrenologist would have attentively noted these cadaverous and tawny visages, flattened foreheads, savage or insidious looks, large necks and mouths, indicating either stupidity or wickedness; nearly all exhibited some frightful bestial resemblance. Upon the hardened features of some was displayed the perfidious cunning of the fox, or the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey; upon that of others, the ferocity of the tiger, or the animal stupidity of the brute. The rotatory marching of this band of silent beings, with their looks of hardened malignancy, their insolent and cynical laughter, crowding and shuffling against each other, in the depth of this court-yard—a species of square pit—presented a strangely ominous appearance. The thought that this ferocious herd, in a given time, would again be let loose upon the world, against which it had declared an implacable war, caused a shudder. What sanguinary vengeance—what murderous projects, were concealed under this show of jeering depravity and effrontery!

Let us sketch a few of the most prominent physiognomies of the Lion's Den, leaving the others for the future.

While the keeper was watching those that were walking, a kind of conventicle was taking place in the sitting-room. Among the prisoners who were engaged in it, Barbillon and Nicholas Martial will be found; of whom, however, we shall speak only from memory.

He who appeared to be, thus to speak, the presiding genius and leader of the discussion, was a prisoner nicknamed *Squelette*† (skeleton),

* In conformity with an excellent sanitary arrangement, each prisoner, on his arrival, and every fortnight afterwards, is conducted to the bathing-hall of the prison, and his garments submitted to a purifying fumigation. To a labourer, a warm bath is a kind of unheard-of luxury.

† In this particular, we experience some scruples. This very year, a poor devil, named Decure, who was only guilty of being a vagabond, had been condemned to imprisonment for a month. He had exhibited himself at a fair, as a *walking skeleton*, on account of his frightful and incredible emaciation. So curious did he appear to us, that we have taken the liberty to use him as our model, although, *morally*, he bears no resemblance to our fictitious skeleton. We give a portion of his examination.

The President—What were you doing at the time of your arrest?

Decure—According to the profession that I practise, as a *walking skeleton*, I was going through all kinds of

whose name has often been heard pronounced at the Martials', on the Island of the Ravageur.

Squelette was provost, or captain of the sitting-room.

The appearance of this man, who was above the ordinary stature, and about forty years of age, justified his lugubrious nickname, by an emaciation, of which it is impossible to convey an idea, and which may be called osteological. If the physiognomies of Squelette's companions were analogous, in a greater or less degree, to those of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the form of his rapidly retreating forehead, his bony, compressed, and elongated jaws, supported by an immensely long neck, vividly called to mind the conformation of a serpent's head. A total baldness heightened this resemblance in a still greater degree; for, under the coarse skin of his forehead, almost as horizontal as that of a reptile, could be distinguished the small protuberances and seams of his scalp. As to his visage, imagine a piece of old parchment, pasted upon the bones of his face, and extending from the projection of his cheek-bones, down to the angle of his lower jaw, the ligaments of which could be distinctly seen. His small, squinting eyes were so deeply sunken, while his eyebrows and cheek-bones were so prominent, that underneath his sallow forehead, where the light played, were exhibited two orbits, literally filled with darkness, and which, at a short distance, seemed to disappear in the depth of these two gloomy cavities, two black holes, which gave to Squelette a most dismal aspect. His long, projecting teeth, jutting out from beneath the tawny skin of his flat and bony jaws, gave, almost incessantly, to his mouth, an habitual sneer.

Although the hardened muscles of this man had almost assumed the character of tendons, he possessed extraordinary strength. The most robust resisted, with difficulty, the grasp of his lengthy arms and long fingers. It might have been called the formidable grasp of an iron skeleton.

He wore a blue frock that was much too short, which exposed, to the gratification of his vanity, his knotty hands, and the half of his arms, or rather, two bones—the *radius* and *cubitus*, if our anatomy will be pardoned—two bones, covered with a coarse and dark skin, divided by a deep groove, through which ran, in a serpent-like manner, a few hard and dry veins, like cords. When he placed his hands upon a table, it appeared—to use an appropriate metaphor of Pique Vinaigre—as though he was displaying a *set of playing-bones.**

Squelette, after having passed fifteen years of his life at the bagnio for theft, and an attempt to commit murder, had violated his ban, and had been caught in the act of committing theft and murder. The last assassination had been perpetrated under circumstances of such atrocity, that this bandit, on account of its being his second offence, already considered himself as condemned to death. The influence that Squelette exercised over the other prisoners, on account of his strength, vigour, and depravity, had caused the director of the prison to choose him as the provost of the dormitory; in other words, Squelette was the police-officer of the sleeping apartment, in everything that related to the order, arrangement and cleanliness of the hall and beds. He acquitted himself so faithfully, that none of the prisoners had ever dared to disobey any of the regulations while he was superintendent.

How strange and significant! The most intelligent of the prison directors, after having in vain attempted to invest the functions to which we allude, upon those prisoners who recommended themselves, in some degree, by their honesty, or whose crimes were less grave, were finally compelled to renounce such a choice—however logical and moral it may have been—and select their provosts from among those who were the most corrupt and the most dreaded; such prisoners *alone* possessing a positive influence over their companions.

Again we will state, that the more daring and wicked was the criminal, the more was he to be relied upon, and—so to speak—*respected*. Is not this fact, established by experience, and sanctioned by this *compulsory choice*, an undeniable argument against the vice of promiscuous imprisonment? Does it not show, by positive evidence, the intensity of the contagion that mortally attaints those prisoners, in whom we have reason to hope there exists some chance of reformation? Yes: for what benefit is derived from thinking of repentance or amendment, when in this pandemonium, where he is to pass many long years, his life perhaps, he sees that influence increases in a ratio with crime?

Again, do we not know that the external world, that honest society, no longer exists for the prisoner? Indifferent to the moral laws which regulate it, he necessarily assumes the habits of those who surround him; all the distinctions of the jail being reserved for the superiority of crime, he inevitably ever aims to reach this savage aristocracy.

Let us return to Squelette, the provost of the lodging-room, who was conversing with several prisoners, among whom were Barbillon and Nicholas Martial.

"Are you certain of what you say?" asked Squelette of Martial.

"Yes, yes; a hundred times, yes. Father Micou got it from Gros-Boiteux, who wished to kill the rascal, because he denounced some one."

"Then let some one bite his nose off, and let that be the end of it," added Barbillon; "Squelette, a moment ago, wanted to give this sneaking Germain a stab."

The provost took his pipe from his mouth for a moment, and said, in a voice so low and gruff, that he could scarcely be heard: "Germain was skulking; he was troublesome, and kept watching us; the more one speaks, the more he listens; we must hustle him out of the Lion's Den; when we have once made him bleed, they will take him away from here."

"Well," said Nicholas, "what's the matter now?"

"The matter is," continued Squelette, "that if he has informed, as the big cripple says, bleeding in is not enough for him!"

"That's all right," said Barbillon.

"We must make an example of him," said Squelette, with increased animation; "it is no longer the police who discover us; it is these informers. Jacques and Gauthier, whom they guillotined the other day, were informed upon; Rousillon,

exercises, for the purpose of amusing young people. I reduce my body to the condition of a skeleton; I extend my bones and muscles at will; I eat arsenic; I swallow boiling oil—I wash myself in it. I am called to Paris, at least once a year, by some of the most respectable physicians—such as MM. Dubois, and Orfila—who make me perform all sorts of experiments with my body, &c.

* Small bones, used by children in a game called *cockle*.

who was sent to the galleys for life, was also denounced!"

"And I? and my mother? and Calebasse? and my brother at Toulon?" cried Nicholas; "were we not informed against by Bras-Rouge? Certainly we were. But instead of putting him here, they sent him to Rougnette; they didn't dare to leave him with us; he smelt a rat, the villain!"

"And I?" said Barbillon; "didn't Bras-Rouge also inform against me?"

"And against me, also?" said a younger prisoner, in a sharp, squeaking, and affected voice. "I was betrayed by Jobert, a man who proposed to me a job, in the Rue Saint-Martin."

This last speaker, with a squeaking voice, pale face, effeminate manner, and an insidious and cowardly expression of countenance, was clad very singularly. Upon his head was a red handkerchief, from underneath which appeared two locks of brown hair, which were parted upon his temples; the two ends of this turban were tied into a bow-not, which was puffed out immediately over his forehead. He wore, as a cravat, a white merino shawl, figured with green palm-leaves, which was crossed upon his breast. His vest, of maroon-coloured cloth, disappeared beneath the girdle of his full, plaid pantaloons, which were of Scotch material, of variegated colours.

"Isn't that mean?—the fellow must be a great scoundrel," said the latter personage, in a squeaking voice. "Nothing in the world could have induced me to suspect Jobert."

"I knew very well that he denounced you," replied the skeleton, who seemed to show great partiality to this prisoner; "and the proof is, that they have treated this informer in the same way that they have treated Bras-Rouge; they didn't dare to send Jobert here; they boxed him up at the *Conciergerie*. We must put an end to it—an example is necessary—false brothers, now-a-days, perform all the business of the police; they believe themselves safe in their schemes, because they are put in a different prison from those whom they have denounced."

"That is true."

"To prevent this, prisoners must look upon every informer as a mortal enemy, whether he has denounced Peter or Jem, here or elsewhere, it makes no difference—on to him! When we have *cooled* four or five of them in the yards, the others will wag their tongues twice before they betray."

"You are right, Squelette," said Nicholas; "Germain must be the first to swallow the dose."

"He will swallow it!" cried the provost; "but let us wait till Gros-Boiteux arrives. When he has proved to every one that Germain is an informer, the business will be settled; the sheep will no longer bleat—we will choke him."

"And how shall we manage the keepers, who are eternally on the look-out?" asked the prisoner, whom Squelette called Javotte.

"I have an idea that Pique Vinaigre will be of service."

"He! he is a coward."

"And no stronger than a flea."

"I know what I am about. Where is he?"

"He has just returned from the parlour; but they have sent for him again, to go and talk with the *prison-rat*."*

"And Germain: is he always in the parlour?"

"Yes, with that little girl who comes to visit him."

"As soon as he returns, be on the look-out; but it will be necessary to wait for Pique Vinaigre; we cannot do anything without him."

"Without Pique Vinaigre?"

"No."

"Shall we *cool* Germain?"

"I will take charge of it."

"But with what weapons? they have taken away our knives."

"And would you put your neck into these pinchers?" asked the skeleton, displaying his long and bony fingers, hard as iron.

"Will you choke him?"

"Slightly!"

"But if they discover that you are the man?"

"After the deed? Do you think I have two heads, like the calf which they show at the fair?"

"True; one is shortened but once, and since you are sure to be, so ——"

"To a certainty—the *prison-rat* repeated it again yesterday. I was caught with my hand in the bag, and my knife at the throat. I have also been convicted once before: my account is settled. I shall send my head to *Charlot*,† to see if he cheats us by putting sawdust in his basket, instead of bran, which is allowed us by the government."

"Truly; the man who is guillotined, has a right to bran. My father was cheated in the same way," said Nicholas Martial, with a ferocious grin. "I intend to appeal from it."

This abominable joke was received with a burst of laughter. The conversation is frightful; but so far from exaggerating, we soften the horror of sentiments, which are so frequently uttered in prisons: and yet it is necessary that the public should form some idea, if it is but a weak one, of what is said in those horrible schools of licentiousness, theft, murder, and perdition. It must be known, with what audacious contempt all great criminals speak of the most awful punishment which society can inflict. The propriety of substituting for these powerless penalties, these contagious seclusions, the only punishment which can terrify the most ferocious villain, we shall presently demonstrate.

The prisoners of the sitting-room had burst into a laugh. "A thousand thunders!" said Squelette; "I wish that the bench of the *curious*† could hear us talk. They think to make us sneak before their guillotine. Let them come to the Barrière Saint-Jacques on the day of the performance for my benefit; they will hear my scornful speech to the crowd, and hear me tell Charlot, with a haughty tone: 'Father Sampson, *the string, if you please.*'"‡

New bursts of laughter welcomed this jest.

"The affair lasts about long enough to swallow a quid. Charlot pulls the string ——"

"And the *baker's* door is opened for you," said Squelette, without removing his pipe.

"You don't say so! Do you believe that there *is* a *baker*?"§

"You fool! I merely said it for a joke. There is a knife, a head beneath it, and—that's all."

"That's none of our business."

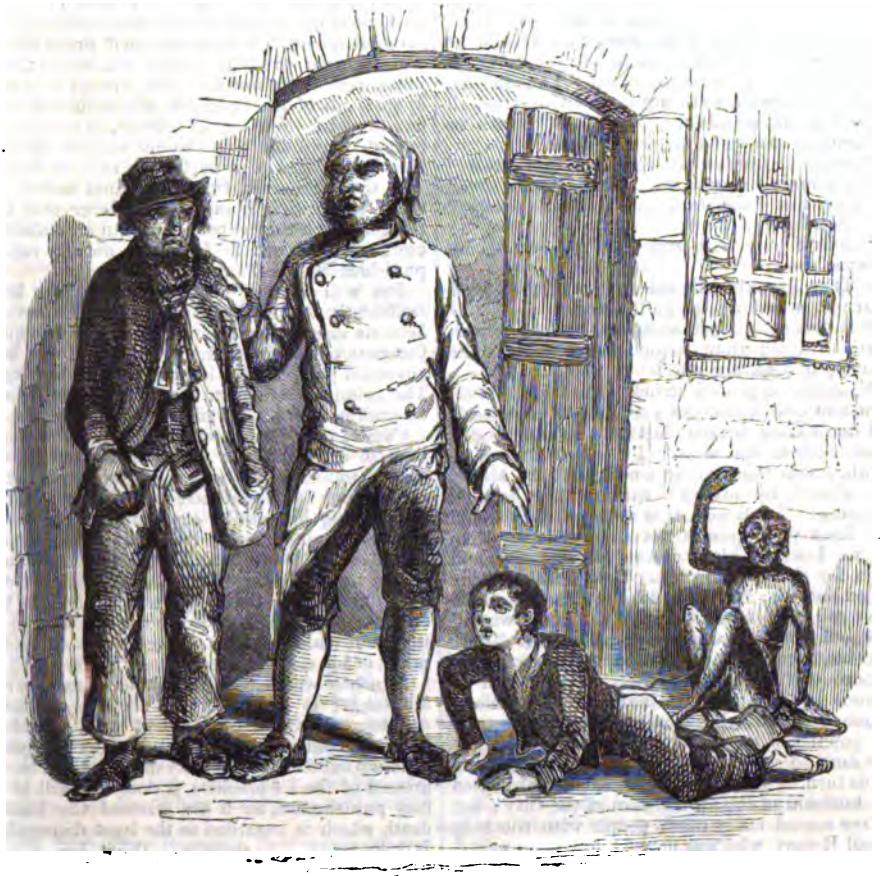
"As for me, now that I know which way my

* Lawyer.

† Executioner. † Judges.

‡ To understand the import of this horrible jest, it must be known that the knife slides between the grooves of the guillotine, after having been set in motion by the drawing of a spring, by means of a string attached to it.

§ Devil.



[The Ancient Rescuing Gringalet.]

course lies, and that I have to halt at the Abbey of Mount-with-regret,* I should just as lief start to-day as to-morrow," said Squelette, with savage exultation. "I wish I was there now; the blood comes to my mouth, when I thing of the crowd that will be there to see me! There will be four or five thousand people fighting with each other for a good place; windows and chairs will be hired, as when a great procession is passing. Methinks I already hear them singing out: 'A chair to let!' 'A place to let!' Besides, the troops will be out, cavalry and infantry—the devil and all his imps. And all this display for me—for Squelette! They wouldn't make so much fuss about an honest man, would they? There is enough in it to give a man spunk and courage, if he was as cowardly as Pique Vinaigre. It is enough to make a fellow walk like a hero! and all those eyes which are staring at you, will put fire into your breast. 'Tis a moment that all have got to go through, and one dies like a brave fellow. It vexes the judges and honest people, to mock old Death."

"That's true," said Barbillon, attempting to imitate the braggadocio bravado of Squelette; "they think they have done wonders, when they send Charlot to set up his shop for our benefit."

"Pshaw!" said Nicholas, in his turn; "who cares for Charlot's shop, or the prison, or the bagnio? who cares a curse about them all, provided we all go together? Hurrah, for death!"

"The greatest bore would be, to shut us up in a cell day and night," said the effeminate youth with a squeaking voice; "and they say that we have got to come to it."

"In a cell!" exclaimed Squelette, with an angry shudder. "In a cell—all alone! Don't mention it! hold your tongue! I'd rather they should cut my arms and legs off. What! all

* The guillotine.

alone between four walls, without any old friends of the trade to laugh with? That cannot be. I prefer a hundred times the bagnio to the central prison, because in the bagnio, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, and sees some people. One goes and comes, and flourishes about with a chain. Well, I'd rather a hundred times be shortened, than shut up in a cell for a single year. Yes, I tell you that at this very hour, when I know, when I am sure, that I shall be mowed down, if they were to ask me, 'Would you prefer a year in a solitary cell?' I should say, 'No,' and stretch forth my neck. One year, all alone! is that possible? What do they wish us to think about, when we are all alone?"

"Suppose they should force you into a cell?"

"I wouldn't stay in it. I would do so much with my feet and hands, that I should escape," said Squelette.

"But if you were sure that you could not escape?"

"Then I would kill the first man that came near me, in order to be guillotined."

"But suppose, instead of condemning a murderer to death, they should condemn him to be shut up in a cell for life?"

Squelette appeared struck with this observation, and after a moment's silence, he continued: "I don't know what I should do: I'd break my head against the walls; I'd starve myself to death, rather than stay in a cell. What! all my life alone! by myself! without any hope of escaping! I tell you, it is not possible to stand it. Look you, there is not a braver fellow than I am. I would bleed a man for sixpence, and even for the honour of it. They think I have killed but two; but if the dead could speak, there are five cold fellows that could tell how I work."

The brigand was undoubtedly boasting. These ferocious braggadocios are the most characteristic feature of hardened criminals. A director of prisons has informed us, that if the murders of which these wretches boast were actually true, the population would be decimated.

"Just so with me," said Barbillon, boasting in his turn. "They think that I have only killed the husband of the milkwoman of the City; but I have served many other people with the help of tall Robert, who was mowed down last year."

"I tell you, I neither fear fire nor the devil. Well, if I was in a cell, and sure that I never could escape—thunder! I think I should be frightened."

"At what?"

"At being left alone," replied the provost.

"Thus, if you were to begin again your tricks of a thief or murderer, and instead of central prisons, bagnios, and guillotines, there were only cells, you would sneak, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, upon my word, I think I should," replied Squelette.

And he spoke the truth. It is impossible to conceive of the unspeakable terror which the thought of solitary confinement inspires in the bandit's mind. Is not this terror an eloquent argument in favour of that penalty? This is not all; the condemnation to solitary confinement, so much dreaded by the criminal, will eventually lead to the abolition of capital punishment, for the following reasons: the crime-stained generation which at present fill our prisons, regard the solitary system as an intolerable torture; habituated to the perverse cheerfulness of general imprisonment—of which we have endeavoured to sketch a few weak features, for we must give up the attempt to convey an idea of the monstrous and unnatural wickedness, of all kinds, which prevails—the present generation of criminals, we say, finding themselves threatened, in case of the repetition of a crime, with solitary imprisonment, and thus separated from the infamous society where they so gaily expiated their crimes, and thus being left alone with the memory of the past, their minds will revolt before such a frightful punishment. Many of them will prefer death; and, in order to incur capital punishment, will not shrink from murder; for, strange as it may appear, out of ten criminals who would wish to end their life, nine would murder, in order to be executed, and one alone would commit suicide. The last vestige of a barbarous state of society will then disappear from our penal codes. In order to remove from the murderer that last refuge, which they expect to find in annihilation, our legislators will be forced to abolish capital punishment.

But will solitary confinement for life, be a sufficiently formidable punishment for certain heinous crimes, such as parricide, for example? Convicts escape from the most secure and best governed prison, or, at least, they hope to escape. The criminals of whom we speak, should have no such possibility, no such hope before them.

Capital punishment, which has no other object than to deliver society from a dangerous being; capital punishment—which seldom gives to the culprit time for repentance, and never the chance of purifying himself, by expiating his offences—a penalty which many criminals suffer almost senseless and inanimate, and which others brave with a frightful sneer—will be, perhaps, replaced by a terrible infliction; but which gives to the culprit an opportunity for repentance and expiation, and which will not suddenly cut off, in the midst of his crimes, a creature of God.

Blindness will remove all chance of escape, and all danger to human life, from the convicted murderer. Capital punishment will, therefore, in this, its only efficacious feature, find an equally effectual substitute. Society does not kill on the ground of the *lex talionis*; it does not kill to inflict punishment, for it has selected the kind of death which is regarded as the least distressing. It kills for its own security. What has society to fear from a blind man in prison? In fine, this perpetual imprisonment, attended with the conversation of the refined and holy, who might devote themselves to such a benevolent mission, would permit the murderer to redeem his crime, by long years of remorse and contrition.

* * *

A great tumult and noisy exclamation of joy, uttered by the prisoners who were promenading in the yard, interrupted the council at which Squelette presided. Nicholas arose hastily, and advanced to the threshold of the sitting-room door, in order to ascertain the cause of the unusual disturbance.

"It is Gros-Boiteux who has arrived," said Nicholas, returning.

"Gros-Boiteux!" bawled out the provost. "And has Germain returned from the parlour?"

"Not yet," said Barbillon.

"Let him make haste then," said Squelette, "so that I may give him an order for a new coffin."

Gros-Boiteux, whose arrival had been welcomed by the prisoners of the Lion's Den with such exultation, and whose denunciation might prove so fatal to Germain, was a man of middle

size, and in spite of his corpulence and infirmity, seemed active and vigorous. His beastly countenance, like that of many of the bandits, bore some resemblance to the bull-dog. His low forehead, his small grey eye, his flabby cheeks, his heavy jaws, the lower one of which was very prominent, and furnished with long teeth, or rather broken tusks, protruding from his lips, rendered his similarity to the brute creation still more striking. He wore upon his head a cap of otter's fur, and a blue cloak with a fur collar hung from his shoulders.

The big cripple entered the prison in the company of a man of about thirty years of age, whose dark and sunburnt visage appeared less degraded than that of the other prisoners, although he affected the dauntless and bravado air of his companion; his smile was at once sad and bitter, and a deep gloom stole over his countenance from time to time. Gros-Boiteux found himself among old friends and acquaintances. He had hardly opportunity to reply to the words which welcomed him from every side.

"Here you are at last, big joker. The more the merrier. We shall have fun now."

"We have wanted you very much."

"You have been a long time getting here."

"I have done everything in my power to get among my old friends again. It's no fault of mine, that the police didn't pick me up sooner."

"Just so, old fellow. We don't go and place our legs in the *darbies*, but when they are once in them, we must wear them."

"You are in luck: Pique Vinaigre is here."

"He also is an old friend of Melun—first rate. His stories will help us to kill time; and he will not lack customers, for I announce to you some recruits."

"Who are they?"

"Just as I was about to be boxed up at the office, they brought in two chaps. One of them I know nothing about, but the other, who wears a blue cotton cap and a grey blouse, caught my eye. It is a head that I have seen before, somewhere. It seems to me that I have met him at the ogress's of the White Rabbit—a well-built fellow."

"Look here, Gros-Boiteux; do you remember that I made a bet with you at Melun, that you would be *pinched* again within a year?"

"That's true, and you've won the bet; for I have had more chances of being caught than of being crowned with honours."

"But what have you done?"

"I have been *prigging* after the American fashion."

"Oh! I understand; always up to your old tricks."

"Always. I pursue my humble path; that trick is a common one, but *muffs* are common also, and if it hadn't been for a jackass trick of my *pal*, I shouldn't have been here. But never mind, the lesson will be of service when I begin anew. I will take my precautions; I have my plans all arranged. Hallo! here is Cardillac!" said the cripple, seeing a small man approaching, shabbily dressed, with a malignant, mean, and cunning look, who united the features of the fox and the wolf; "good day, old fellow."

"Hallo! you limping genius!" said the prisoner surnamed Cardillac, to the cripple; "some of us have been saying every day, 'He will come,' others, 'He will not come;' the gentleman is like a pretty woman, he must be coveted."

"To be sure, to be sure he must."

"Look here!" said Cardillac, "have you been sent here for something smart, something in the Corsican fashion?"

"Upon my word, my dear fellow, I've gone a peg higher than burglary; before that I had performed some nice jobs, but the last flashed in the pan—a superb affair, which, by the way, will come off yet; unfortunately, myself and Frank, whom you see, just missed it:" and Gros-Boiteux pointed to his companion, upon whom all eyes were fixed.

"Hallo! sure enough, here is Frank," said Cardillac; "I shouldn't have known him, on account of his beard. Is it really you? I thought at least that you were mayor of your village by this time; you wanted to play the honest, didn't you?"

"I was a fool, and I smart for it," said Frank, in a surly tone; "but there is a pardon for every sin. I can afford it once. Now I belong to the family of thieves till I burst; look out, when I begin!"

"That's plucky! that's what I call fine language."

"But what the devil has happened to you, Frank?"

"That which happens to every liberated convict who is fool enough to play the honest man, fate is so just. When I left Melun, I had nine hundred francs and odd."

"That is true," said Gros-Boiteux; "all his troubles have sprung from keeping his money, instead of eating it up when he left his prison. You will see whither repentance leads, and whether anything is to be made out of it."

"They sent me to Etamps, under *surveillance*," continued Frank; "as I am a locksmith, I went to a man of my trade, and said to him: 'I am a liberated convict, and I know that people don't like to employ them, but here are the nine hundred francs which I have saved; give me some work; my money will be surety for me; I want to work, and gain an honest living."

"Upon my word, there is no man like Frank, for such ideas."

"He always was a little cracked, as if his head had been struck with a hammer."

"Of course, he is a locksmith."

"You are a witty dog!"

"You will see now, what came from his honesty."

"I proposed then, my savings as a security to the master locksmith to give me employment. 'I am not a broker, to take money on interest,' said he to me, 'and I don't want a liberated convict in my shop: I am employed in houses to open the door when the key is lost; my trade necessarily requires confidence, and if it was known that I employed a liberated convict among my workmen, I should lose my customers; so, good evening, neighbour."

"Don't you think, Cardillac, that he was served right?"

"Certainly, he was."

"What a child you were," said Gros-Boiteux, addressing Frank in a paternal manner; "instead of breaking your ban at once, and coming to Paris to eat up your savings, in order to be penniless, and have a good excuse for stealing, when superb ideas always pop into our heads ——"

"What's the use of repeating the same thing over and over?" said Frank, with impatience. "It is true I was wrong not to spend my earnings, since I have had no enjoyment from them. To return to my *surveillances*: as there were but

four locksmiths in Etamps, the one to whom I applied first blabbed to all the others, and they told me, like their friend, 'No, I thank you;' so that I met the same treatment on every side."

"You see, my friends, the use of being honest. We are marked for life, I tell you!"

"Thrown into the streets of Etamps, I lived upon my earnings one month—two months. The moments flew away, but the money didn't come. I broke my ban, and left Etamps."

"That's what you should have done at first, jackanapes."

"I came to Paris and found some work, as my employer didn't know who I was; for I told him I had just come from the provinces, and that he hadn't a better workman in his shop. I placed the seven hundred francs which remained with a broker, who gave me a note; and when it was due he wouldn't pay me, and I put my note into the hands of an officer. He sues, and recovers the money, which I left in his hands, saying to myself: 'It will serve for a rainy day.' About that time, I came across Gros-Boiteux."

"Yes, my friends; and I was the rainy day, as you will see presently. Frank was a locksmith, and manufactured keys. I had a job in hand, in which he might be useful, and I proposed it to him. I had some impressions, and there was nothing to do but to make keys for them, and that was in his line. The child refused; he wished to become honest. I said to myself: 'I will do him a service, in spite of himself.' I wrote an anonymous letter to his employer, and another to his fellow-workmen, telling them that Frank was a liberated convict. The employer kicked him into the street, and the fellow-workmen turned up their noses. He applied to another master, and worked there a week, when I played him the same game. If he had applied to ten, I should have served him in the same manner."

"I did not suspect, then, that it was you who informed against me," said Frank. "Had I known it, you would have passed a very unpleasant quarter of an hour."

"I suppose so; but I am a fool. I told you, that I was going to Longjumeau to see my uncle; but I remained in Paris, and learnt all that you were about, by means of little Ledru."

"Well, I was turned away from my last employer, as a fellow only fit to be hung. Work then, be honest, so that people may ask you, not 'What are you doing?' but, 'What have you done?' Once in the street, I said to myself: 'I have my savings, while I am waiting for work.' I went to see the officer; he had bolted, and my money had vanished with him. I was penniless; I hadn't even enough to pay for a week's lodging. How mad I was! About that time, Gros-Boiteux, looking as if he had just arrived from Longjumeau, took advantage of my anger. I didn't know what the devil to do, having seen that there was no use in being honest, that, once in the thieving line, a fellow was in for life. Gros-Boiteux kept constantly treading on my heels ——"

"That brave Frank no longer sneaks," said Gros-Boiteux: "he makes up his mind like a hero, dives into it—comes out grand; but, as luck would have it, just as we opened our mouths to swallow the rich morsel, we were seized by the *gendarmes*. What could we do, my boys? It is one of the misfortunes of a trade that would be too respectable without it."

"After all, if that rascally bailiff hadn't stolen my money, I shouldn't have been here," said Frank, with concentrated rage.

"Well, well, said Gros-Boiteux, "just at present, you are very rich; you think, I suppose, you were much better off, when you were killing yourself with work."

"I was free."

"Yes, on Sunday, and when work didn't press; but the rest of the week you were chained up like a dog—and you were not always sure of work. I tell you, that you don't know what is for your own interest."

"You will teach it to me," said Frank, with bitterness.

"After all, you have good reasons to be vexed. It is a pity that our job failed, it was such a superb one, and it will keep for two months; the fellows will feel more safe, and the experiment can be repeated. It is a rich house—very rich. I shall be sentenced for breaking my ban, so that I shall be unable to resume the job; but if I can find an amateur, I will part with it for a consideration. My woman has the impressions, and all that is to be done, is to manufacture the false keys; and, with the information that I can give, it will go smooth as grease. There was, and is still, ten thousand francs which may be handled: that should be consolation for you, Frank."

The accomplice of Gros-Boiteux shook his head, crossed his arms upon his breast, and made no answer.

Cardillac took Gros-Boiteux by the arm, drew him into the corner of the yard, and said to him, after a moment's silence: "Is the job in which you failed a good one still?"

"In two months, it will be as good as new."

"Can you prove it?"

"To be sure, I can."

"What will you sell it for?"

"A hundred francs in advance; and I will send word to my woman to give up the impressions, by which some false keys may be made. Besides, if the affair succeeds, I shall expect that one-fifth of the profits will be handed over to my woman."

"It is reasonable!"

"As I shall know to whom the impressions are given, if I am fleeced in the bargain, I will denounce you!"

"You would be right, if you were fleeced: honesty among thieves, I say! We must trust to each other, or there could be no business transactions between us."

Another anomaly, which prevails among these outlaws—the wretch told the truth. It is seldom that thieves break their promises in bargains of that nature; these criminal affairs are governed by a sort of probity, or in order to avoid prostituting their word, we should rather say that a necessity compels these bandits to keep their promise; for if they should violate it, "there could be no business transactions between them," as the companion of Gros-Boiteux expressed it. Thefts and robberies are frequently exchanged and bartered in prison, which is another frightful feature of promiscuous imprisonment.

"If what you tell me is true," said Cardillac; "I can make arrangements with you for the job: there are no proofs against me, and I am sure of being acquitted. I shall be tried within a fortnight. I shall be set at liberty within twenty days. The time employed in looking about and picking up information, making false keys, &c., will occupy a month—say six weeks."

"That will be just about the space that the

fellows need to recover from their alarm; and besides, a chap that has been robbed once, is not apt to fear it again—you know that."

"Yes, I know it; I will take the job—it is a bargain."

"But, will you have the wherewithal to pay me? I wish the money advanced."

"Here, take my last button. When all is gone, there is still some left," said Cardillac, pulling one of the cloth-covered buttons from his ragged old coat, and tearing away the wrapper with his nails, showed instead of a button-mould, a forty-franc piece. "You see," he added, "that I can pay you something in advance, when we have talked about the affair."

"Agreed then, old boy," said Gros-Boiteux; "since you are to go out soon, and have a capital to start upon, I can help you in the way of increasing it. It is very young yet, a sort of embryo, a real baby theft, which my woman and myself have been nursing for two months, and which can now walk alone. Just imagine a lonely house in a deserted quarter, a first-floor looking on one side into a depopulated street, and upon the other side into a garden, inhabited by two old folks, who go to roost with the chickens. Since the riots, and through fear of being robbed, they have concealed in a corner, a large preserve pot, filled with gold. My woman discovered the whole affair by making the servant *gab*. But I must tell you, that this job will be dearer than the other; it is already cooked, and fit to be served up."

"We will arrange it between ourselves; give yourself no trouble. I see you have worked to some purpose since you left the central prison."

"I have been in tolerable luck. I made, one way and the other, fifteen hundred francs. One of my tit-bits was the *cleaning out* of two women, who lodged in the same house with myself, in the Passage de la Brasserie."

"At the house of Father Micou, the receiver?"

"Right!"

"And how is your woman Josephine?"

"She is always a real ferret; she will show to advantage in the job at the house of those old people I spoke to you about. She is the woman to smell out a pot of *yellow-boys!*"

"She is a high-mettled *piece*."

"I am proud of her! But speaking of high-mettled women, do you know Chouette well?"

"Yes. Nicholas told me that the Schoolmaster had *finished* her, and afterwards became crazy."

"It is, perhaps, on account of the loss of his sight by an accident, which I know nothing about. Well, my old Cardillac, it is agreed, since you will bargain with me for my *babies*, I will speak to no one about them."

"To nobody, mind! I will take them from the nurse's hand, and we will talk about them to-night."

"How do you spend your time here?"

"We laugh and play the fool."

"Who is the provost of the company?"

"Squelette."

"He's a tough bit. I met him at the Martials', at the Island of the Ravageur; we had some fine sprees together, with Josephine and Boulotte."

"By the way, Nicholas is here."

"I know it; Father Micou told me. He complained that Nicholas made him sing. I'll draw a small tune from the old villain's throat; receivers are made for that purpose."

"We were speaking of Squelette, and here he is!" said Cardillac, pointing to the provost, who appeared at the door of the sitting-room.

"Answer to the roll," said Squelette to Gros-Boiteux.

"Here!" said the latter, entering the hall in company with Frank, who took his arm.

While Cardillac, Gros-Boiteux, and Frank, had been conversing together, Barbillon had been, by order of the provost, to rally twelve of the most daring prisoners, who, in order not to awaken the suspicion of the guard, had entered one by one into the sitting-room.

The rest of the prisoners remained in the yard; and some of them, instigated by Barbillon, spoke in loud and angry voices, in order to attract the attention of the guard, and distract his vigilance from the sitting-room, where Nicholas, Squelette, Barbillon, Frank, Cardillac, and Gros-Boiteux, with about fifteen other prisoners, were waiting with impatient curiosity for Squelette to open his lips. Barbillon, who was charged to watch, and give a signal when the guard approached, placed himself near the door. Squelette, removing the pipe from his mouth, said to Gros-Boiteux: "Do you know a fellow called Germain, with brown hair, blue eyes, and the look of a sneak?"

"Is Germain here?" exclaimed Gros-Boiteux, whose features expressed at the same time, surprise, hatred, and anger.

"You know him, then?" asked Squelette.

"Don't I know him? he is an informer. I denounce him to you, my friends; he must be thrashed."

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed the prisoners.

"Are you quite sure that he has informed?" asked Frank. "It would be too bad to thrash a man who doesn't deserve it."

This observation displeased Squelette, who leaned towards Gros-Boiteux, and whispered to him: "Who is this chap?"

"A man with whom I have *worked*."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Oh, yes; but he is a *flat;* I'll keep my eye on him."

"Let us hear how Germain turned informer."

"Explain yourself, Gros-Boiteux," exclaimed Squelette, fixing his eye on Frank.

"It happened in this manner," said Gros-Boiteux. "A fellow from Nantes, named Velu, an old liberated convict, brought up this young fellow, whose parents are unknown. When he was old enough he placed him in the house of a banker, thinking that he had let a wolf into his vault, and intending to make use of Germain for a superb job, which he had been for a long time nursing. He had two strings to his bow—a forgery, or the rifling of the banker's vault. A hundred thousand francs in two blows. Everything was ready, and Velu relied upon the young man as upon himself. The youngster slept in the pavilion, where the vault was. Velu disclosed to him his plan. Germain gave no answer, but denounced everything to his employer, and started the same night for Paris."

The prisoners uttered murmurs of indignation, and violent threats.

"He is an informer; we must break his bones!"

"If you like, I'll pick a quarrel with him, and smash him."

"We must mark upon his face a ticket of admission to the hospital."

"Order! order!" cried Squelette, in an imperious tone. The prisoners were silent. "Proceed," continued he, addressing Gros-Boiteux.

"Relying upon the aid of Germain, Velu and two of his friends attempted the affair that very night. The bankers were on the look-out, and one of Velu's friends was caught, while climbing through a window, but Velu himself had the good luck to escape, and came to Paris, furious with rage at having been denounced by Germain, and at having missed a superb chance. One day, he met the youngster, but as it was broad daylight, he dared not attack him, but he followed him, and discovered where he lived; and one night Velu, little Ledru, and myself, fell upon Germain. Unluckily for us, he escaped, and removed from the Rue du Temple, where he then lived, and since that time we haven't been able to catch sight of him; but if he is here, I demand ——"

"You have nothing to demand," said Squelette, authoritatively. Gros-Boiteux was silent. "I will take the bargain. Yield to me the skin of Germain, and I'll flay him alive. I am not called Squelette for nothing. I am already dead. My hole is dug at Clamart. I risk nothing in working for the fraternity. The informers injure us more than the police. They are forced to send the scamps to the Roquette, and the informers of the Roquette to the Conciergerie. They think them safe; but stop a bit. When each prison shall have killed the informer who is in it, never mind whom or where he has denounced, it will destroy the appetite of the remainder. I will set the example, and let the others follow it."

All the prisoners, applauding the resolution of Squelette, drew close to him. Barbillon himself, instead of remaining near the door, joined the group, and did not perceive that a new prisoner was entering the sitting-room. The new comer, who wore a grey blouse, with a blue cotton cap, embroidered with red worsted, pulled over his eyes, started at hearing the name of Germain, and hastened to mingle among the admirers of Squelette, and approved with voice and gesture the criminal determination of the provost.

"Isn't that Squelette a smart fellow?"

"The devil himself couldn't make him flinch."

"He is an out-and-outer."

"If every thief had as much courage, we would be the judges, and send the sneaks to the guillotine."

"That would be right; every one in his turn."

"Yes, but there is no concert between us."

"Squelette will render a great service to the fraternity. When denouncers find that they are cooled down, there will be no more denouncing."

"That's true!"

"And since Squelette is sure of being mowed down, it will cost him nothing to settle the account of a denouncer."

"As for me, I think that it is too bad to kill this young man," said Frank.

"What! what!" exclaimed Squelette, in an angry tone, "have we not the right to kill a traitor?"

"In fact, he is a traitor! so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These last words, and the voucher of Gros-Boiteux, dispelled from the minds of the prisoners all doubt of Frank's fidelity. Squelette alone continued to mistrust him.

"What shall we do with the keepers, Dead-beforehand?—for that is as much your name as Squelette," said Nicholas, grinning.

"We will keep the guard busy in some other part of the yard."

"No, we will hold him by force."

"Yes."

"No."

"Order!" exclaimed Squelette. The most profound silence followed. "Listen to me attentively," continued the provost, in his hoarse voice. "We sh'an't be able to cool the rascal, while the keeper is in the sitting-room or the yard. I have no knife—there will be some smothered groans—the denouncer will struggle."

"What shall we do, then?"

"This is the way:—Pique Vinaigre has promised to relate to us after dinner, his story of Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux. It is going to rain; we will all retire here, and the denouncer will come and station himself in his corner, as usual. We will give a few sous to Pique Vinaigre, that he may begin his story. It will be about the dinner-hour; the guard will see us busy listening to the nonsense about Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux; he will have no suspicion, and will go and take a turn in the kitchen. As soon as he leaves the yard, we shall have a quarter of an hour to ourselves; the denouncer will be cooled before the guard returns. I will take charge of him. I have smashed the heads of fellows harder than his; but I don't want help."

"Hold!" exclaimed Cardillac; "what shall we do with the bailiff that comes here to lounge at dinner-time? If he comes into the sitting-room, to listen to Pique Vinaigre, and sees that they are cooling Germain, he will sing out for help. That bailiff is not one of us; he has a private cell, and I mistrust him."

"That is true," said Squelette.

"Is there a bailiff here?" exclaimed Frank, who, as we have stated, was the victim of Master Boulard's abuse of confidence; "is there a bailiff here?" repeated he, with astonishment; "what is his name?"

"Boulard," said Cardillac.

"It's my man!" exclaimed Frank, clenching his fists; "he is the man who robbed me of my earnings."

"The bailiff?" asked the provost.

"Yes; seven hundred and twenty francs, which he received for me."

"Do you know him? Has he seen you?" asked Squelette.

"To be sure I have seen him, to my misfortune; without him, I shouldn't have been here."

These regrets grated upon Squelette's ear; he fastened his savage eyes upon Frank, who was answering some questions of his comrade; and leaning towards Gros-Boiteux, the provost said, in a low voice: "That chap is capable of informing the guard of our design."

"No; I vouch for him, he will denounce nobody; but his conscience is rather tender, and he might attempt to defend Germain. It will be best to keep him out of the yard."

"Enough!" whispered Squelette; and added, in a loud tone: "I say, Frank, don't you mean to thrash that bailiff?"

"Leave him to my hands; let him come here, and his account will be settled."

"He will come here soon; get yourself ready."

"I am ready; I shall leave my mark on him."

"That will make a fight; they will send the bailiff to his cell, and Frank to the dungeon," said Squelette to Gros-Boiteux in a low voice; "and we shall thus get clear of both of them."

"What wisdom! Isn't that Squelette an artful cove?" said a bandit, with admiration; and speaking aloud, continued: "Shall we inform Pique Vinaigre that we shall make use of his story to deceive the guard, and slay the denouncer?"

"No; Pique Vinaigre is too much of a coward. If he knew it, he wouldn't tell his story; but, when the thing is done, he will keep quiet."

The dinner-bell now sounded. "Come, dogs, go and be fed," said Squelette. "Pique Vinaigre and Germain will soon come in; keep a bright look-out. I am called Dead-beforehand; the denouncer is dead beforehand, also."

CHAPTER V.*

THE STORY-TELLER.

The new prisoner to whom we have alluded, who wore a cotton cap and grey blouse, had listened attentively, and approved with great cordiality, the plot which threatened the life of Germain. He was a man of athletic form; and he left the sitting-room with the other prisoners, without exciting particular attention, and soon mingled with the different groups who were crowding about the distributors of food, carrying boiled meat in brass basins, and the bread in large baskets. Each of the prisoners received a piece of boiled beef without bone, which had served to make the meat soup of the morning, in which bread was soaking, superior in quality to the bread of soldiers.* The prisoners who have any money, are at liberty to purchase wine at the bar, or go there and drink a mixture of wine and water, called *gobette*. Those who, like Nicholas, received provisions from without, gave an entertainment, to which they invited their particular friends. The present guests of the son of the executed man, were Squelette, Barbillon, and, upon the recommendation of this last individual, Pique Vinaigre, so as to dispose him favourably to relate his story. The hock of ham, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, and white bread, which had been forced from Father Micou, were spread upon one of the benches of the sitting-room; and Squelette prepared himself for the repast as coolly as if he was not about to commit a horrible murder.

"Go and see why Pique Vinaigre does not come. While waiting to strangle Germain, I am myself strangled with hunger and thirst. Do not forget to tell Gros-Boiteux, that Frank must spring upon the officer, so as to clear them both out of the Lion's Den."

"Be easy, Dead-beforehand; if Frank don't pounce on the bailiff, it won't be our fault:" and Nicholas left the sitting-room.

At the same moment, Master Boulard entered the yard, smoking a cigar, his hands plunged in his long grey frock-coat, his cap carefully pulled over his ears, his face smiling and blooming; and he perceived Nicholas, who was looking out for Frank. This last person and Gros-Boiteux were dining together, seated upon one of the benches of the yard. They did not perceive the bailiff, for their backs were turned to him. Faithful to the advice of Squelette, Nicholas, perceiving the approach of Master Boulard, did not appear to observe him, but drew near to Frank and Gros-Boiteux.

"Good day, my brave fellow," said the bailiff to Nicholas.

"Ah! good day, sir. I didn't see you. You have come to take a short walk, as usual?"

"Yes, my boy; and to-day, I have two reasons for it. I will tell you why; but in the first place, take some cigars. Come, no ceremony between comrades."

"Thank you, sir. What are your two reasons for walking?"

"You shall soon understand it, my boy. I have no appetite to-day; and I said to myself: 'If I attend the dinner of my companions, and see them work their jaws, perhaps the appetite will come.'"

"That's not such a bad idea; but if you wish to see two chaps masticate nicely," said Nicholas, drawing the bailiff by degrees towards the bench of Frank, whose back was still turned, "look at these two fellows, who swallow everything raw. Your stomach will smart as if you had devoured an entire pot of pickles."

"By heavens! let me see the phenomenon!" cried Master Boulard.

"Hallo, Gros-Boiteux!" sung out Nicholas.

Frank and his companion turned their heads. The bailiff remained stupefied, with open mouth, when he recognised the man he had plundered.

Frank, throwing his bread and meat upon the bench, with one leap seized Master Boulard by the throat, exclaiming: "My money!"

"How—what—you stran—gle me—I ——"

"My money!"

"Hear me, my friend."

"My money! and yet it is too late, for the fault is yours that I am here."

"But I ——"

"If I am sent to the galleys, it will be your fault, for if I had the money of which you robbed me, I shouldn't have been forced to steal; I should have remained an honest man, as I wished to be, and you, I presume, will be acquitted. They won't punish you, but I will put my mark on you; you have jewels and a gold chain, yet you rob poor people—take that and that—and that—have you got enough? No; take that also!"

"Help! help!" exclaimed the bailiff, rolling under the feet of Frank, who was pummelling him with vengeance.

The remainder of the prisoners, perfectly indifferent to the merits of the fight, formed a ring around the combatants, or rather, around the beater and the beaten; for Master Boulard, frightened and out of breath, offered no resistance, endeavouring to parry, as well as he was able, the blows which his adversary showered upon him. Fortunately, the guard answered the cries of the bailiff, and rescued him from the hands of Frank. Master Boulard was assisted to rise; he was pale, trembling, with one of his eyes bunged, and without waiting to pick up his cap, he exclaimed, running towards the gate: "Keeper! keeper! open the door! I won't remain a second!"

"And you who have beaten this gentleman, follow me to the director," said the guard, taking Frank by the collar; "you shall be confined two days in the dungeon."

* Such is the fare of prisons. At the morning meal, each prisoner receives a bowl of vegetable or meat soup, containing a pint of broth; at the evening meal, a piece of beef without bone, or a dish of vegetables—beans, potatoes, &c. The same kind of vegetable is not given on two consecutive days. Prisoners have a right, in the name of humanity, to this healthy and abundant food; but we must repeat, that the most laborious and steady workmen do not eat meat or meat soup ten times a year.

"I don't care; I am quits with him," said Frank.

"Look here," said Gros-Boiteux, pretending to assist Frank, "not a word of what we intend to do to the denouncer!"

"Be easy; if I was present, perhaps I should defend him, for it is too bad to murder a man; but I am not the chap to denounce you!"

"Come, follow me," said the guard.

"We have got rid of both the bailiff and Frank; it is growing warm for the informer," said Nicholas.

At the moment Frank left the yard, Germain and Pique Vinaigre entered it.

When Germain appeared in the yard, he was no longer the same person. His countenance, which had thus far been downcast and depressed, was now proud and cheerful; he carried his head high, and cast around him a joyful and assured look. He was loved—the horrors of the prison disappeared. Pique Vinaigre followed him in an embarrassed manner. After having made two or three attempts to approach him, he made a desperate effort, and touched gently the arm of Germain, before the latter had drawn near the group of the prisoners, who were watching him from a distance, with a sinister expression, confident that their victim could not escape.

Germain started, in spite of himself, at the touch of Pique Vinaigre, for the face and appearance of the juggler were not very prepossessing; but, calling to mind the advice of Rigolette, and too joyful to curb his benevolence, Germain halted, and said kindly to Pique Vinaigre: "What do you wish?"

"I wish to thank you!"

"For what?"

"For what your charming visitor intends to do for my poor sister!"

"I do not understand you," said Germain, with surprise.

"I will explain it to you. I just now met at the office of the keeper, who was in the parlour ——"

"Yes, he is an excellent man."

"Keepers, usually, do not answer to the name of excellent men, but Father Rousselle deserves it. He whispered in my ear: 'Pique Vinaigre, my boy, do you know M. Germain?' 'Yes, the black beast of the yard,' I replied. But, interrupting himself, Pique Vinaigre said to Germain: 'Excuse me for calling you black beast—don't mind it—wait for the end.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I know M. Germain, the black beast of the yard!' 'And, perhaps, he is your black beast, Pique Vinaigre,' said the guard, in a severe tone. 'My guard, I am too good-natured, and too much of a poltroon, to permit myself to have any beast, black, white, or grey, and M. Germain less than any other; for he does not seem wicked, and they are unjust towards him.' 'You are right, Pique Vinaigre, to stand up for M. Germain,' said the guard, 'for he has been very kind to you.' 'To me, my guard; how so?' 'Perhaps it is not to you, personally, but, for all that, you should be grateful to him!' answered Father Rousselle."

"Explain yourself more clearly," said Germain, smiling.

"That is precisely what I said to the guard—speak more clearly; and he replied to me: 'It is not M. Germain, but his pretty little visitor, who has showed great kindness to your sister—she overheard your sister relating to you her domestic troubles, and at the time the poor woman left the parlour, the young girl offered her all the assistance in her power to give.'"

"Excellent Rigolette!" exclaimed Germain, with emotion; "how careful she was, to say nothing of it to me!"

"I then replied to the guard: 'I am but a goose; you are right, M. Germain has been kind to me, for the goodness of his visitor is the same as his own, and my sister Jeanne is as dear to me as myself—nay, more than myself!'"

"Poor little Rigolette, I am not astonished at her generosity and obliging disposition!"

"The guard continued: 'I heard all this, without appearing to hear it; now you are informed, if you do not try to be kind to Germain, if you do not inform him if any plot is meditated against him, you will be a miserable wretch, Pique Vinaigre.' 'I am somewhat a wretch, it is true, my guard; but I do not deserve to be called a complete wretch; and, in short, since the visitor of M. Germain has been so kind as to assist poor Jeanne—for she is a good and honest woman, of whom I am proud—I shall do for M. Germain all that I can—unfortunately, it is but little.' 'Never mind; do all that you can. I will, also, tell you a good piece of news to inform M. Germain.'"

"What is it?" asked the son of Madame Georges.

"To-morrow, there will be a vacant cell; and the guard told me to inform you of it."

"Is it possible? how rejoiced I am!" exclaimed Germain; "the good man was right—you have brought me excellent news."

"I believe so; for your place is not with people like us, M. Germain:" and then, interrupting himself, Pique Vinaigre hastened to add, in a low voice, stooping down, as if he was picking up something: "The prisoners are looking at us; they seem astonished to see us talking together—I must leave you; keep a good look out for yourself: if they try to pick a quarrel, don't give any answer; they wish for a pretext to get you into a quarrel, and then beat you. Barbillon will be the one to begin the dispute: look out for him, I will try to prevent it."

And Pique Vinaigre arose, as if he had discovered the article for which he had pretended to search.

"Thank you, my good fellow; I shall be prudent," said Germain, quickly, parting from his companion.

Pique Vinaigre, having been informed of the plot of the morning only, which consisted of forcing Germain into a quarrel, and beating him, in order to oblige the keeper to remove him from the ward, was, of course, ignorant of the murder devised by Squelette; and also, that they relied upon his story of Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux, to distract the attention of the guard.

"Come along, you lazy scamp," said Nicholas, meeting Pique Vinaigre; "let alone that miserable ration—I have a feast, and invite you to it."

"Where is it? at the Panier-Fleuri, or Petit-Ramponneau?"

"No, you funny dog, in the sitting-room; the dinner is served upon a bench; we have a hock of ham, eggs, and cheese—I treat to-day."

"That suits me; but 'tis a pity to lose my ration, and a greater pity that my sister should not improve by it; neither she nor her children

see meat often, unless it is at the door of the butcher's shop."

"Come, walk along; Squelette is impatient and ravenous; he and Barbillon could devour the whole."

Nicholas and Pique Vinaigre went into the sitting-room; the Skeleton was sitting astride the end of the bench, upon which the provisions of Nicholas were spread out. He was swearing and grumbling, while waiting for the master of the feast.

"Here you are, at last, you snail-like loiterer!" cried the bandit, on perceiving the story-teller; "what were you about there?"

"He was talking with Germain," said Nicholas, cutting up the ham.

"Ah! you were talking with Germain?" said Squelette, looking attentively at Pique Vinaigre; still, however, continuing to eat greedily.

"Yes," replied the story-teller; "he is not the one who invented bootjacks and hard eggs. I say this, because I quite adore that vegetable. How stupid he is! Oh, dear, how stupid he is! I had heard that he was playing the spy in the prison; but he is too much of a bumpkin for that."

"You think so?" said Squelette, exchanging rapid and significant glances with Nicholas and Barbillon.

"I am as sure of it, as that ham is ham! And how the devil would you have him spy upon us? He is always alone: he speaks to nobody, and nobody speaks to him; he runs away from us, as if we had the cholera. If he can make up reports upon that, they must be very fat ones! and, moreover, he can't spy upon us much longer, for he is going into a separate room."

"He!" exclaimed Squelette; "and when?"

"To-morrow morning, there will be a cell vacant."

"You see clearly, that we must kill him at once. He does not sleep in my room. To-morrow, it will be too late—and to-day, we have only till four o'clock, and it is now near three," said the Skeleton, whispering to Nicholas, while Pique Vinaigre was talking to Barbillon.

"'Tis all the same," replied Nicholas, appearing to answer what Squelette had said to him; "Germain seems to despise us."

"On the contrary, my children, you intimidate this young man; he considers himself in prison with you, the lowest of the low. Do you know what he said to me, just now?"

"No: let us hear it."

"He said to me: 'How happy you must be, Pique Vinaigre, to dare to speak with that famous Skeleton'—he said famous, as if you were his equal; 'for myself, I wish so much that I dared speak to him—but he produces such an effect upon me—so respectful—so respectful—that were I to see the prefect of the police, in flesh and blood, with his uniform on, I should not be more dumbfounded.'"

"Did he say that?" asked Squelette, appearing to believe, and to be influenced by the *admiration* Germain had expressed for him.

"He told me so, as truly as you are the greatest brigand on earth!"

"That makes a difference. I will make it up with him. Barbillon had intended picking a quarrel with him, but he had just as well leave it alone."

"Much better!" cried Pique Vinaigre, convinced that he had averted the danger with which Germain had been menaced; "he will do much better, for that poor lad would not snap at a quarrel; he is one of my sort—as courageous as a hare."

"And yet it is a pity," said Squelette; "we had reckoned upon that scrimmage, for our afternoon's amusement. The time will seem long to us!"

"Yes; what can we do then?" said Nicholas.

"As that's the case, let Pique Vinaigre tell us a story," said Barbillon; "I will not pick a quarrel with Germain."

"Agreed!" said the story-teller, "agreed! That is one condition, but there is another—and, without you agree to both of them, I will tell no story."

"Well, tell us your other condition."

"It is, that the honourable society, which is overflowing with capitalists," said Pique Vinaigre, assuming his showman's accent, "will be pleased to grant me a contribution of twenty sous! Twenty sous, gentlemen, to hear the famous Pique Vinaigre, who has had the honour of holding forth before the most renowned *prigs*, before the most celebrated cut-throats of France and of Navarre; and who is very shortly expected at Brest and at Toulon, whither he repairs by order of the government! Twenty sous! why, 'tis dirt-cheap, gentlemen!"

"Well, well! the twenty sous will be made up for you, after you have told your story!"

"After? no—before!" cried Pique Vinaigre.

"Hallo! what do you mean by that? Do you think we are capable of swindling you out of twenty sous?" said Squelette, in a mortified tone.

"Not at all," replied Pique Vinaigre; "I honour the *pégre* with my confidence—it is to spare its purse, that I demand the twenty sous in advance."

"By your word of honour?"

"Yes, gentlemen; for after I have told my story, you will be so delighted, that it would not be twenty sous—but twenty, ay! even a hundred francs—which you would force upon me! I know myself, and I might have the meanness to accept it. You, therefore, see, that from economy, you will do better to give the twenty sous in advance."

"It is not *gammon* you are wanting in!"

"My tongue is all I have, and I must, therefore, use it as I can—and, besides, the real secret of the matter is, that my sister and her children are in a terrible strait; and twenty sous, in a small family, make some difference."

"Why does she not steal, this sister of yours, and her brats too, if they are old enough?" asked Nicholas.

"Don't speak of it, she quite afflicts me. She dishonours me. I am too tender-hearted."

"Say too stupid, since you encourage her!"

"It is true, I encourage her in the vice of being honest; but that's the only trade she is good at. I am perfectly ashamed of her; but is it agreed? I will tell you the famous history of Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux, but I must have my twenty sous, and Barbillon will not pick a quarrel with that simpleton, Germain."

"You shall have your twenty sous, and Barbillon will not pick a quarrel with that simpleton, Germain," said Squelette.

"Then open wide your ears, you are about to hear something most wonderful. But see, it rains, and sends in my customers; there will be no occasion now, to go to fetch them." And it

began actually to rain—the prisoners left the yards, and came to shelter themselves in the sitting-room, accompanied by the keeper.

We have before stated, that this sitting-room was a long, wide hall, paved with flag-stones, having three windows looking on the yard; in the centre was the stove, near which Squelette, Barbillon, Nicholas, and Pique Vinaigre had placed themselves. Upon a sign made to him by the provost, Gros-Boiteux joined this group. Germain came in, one of the last, absorbed by his delightful thoughts. He mechanically seated himself upon the edge of the last window in the hall, a place which he usually occupied, and which no one contended for; it being at a distance from the stove, round which the prisoners always crowded.

We have already stated, that about fifteen of the prisoners had been informed of the treachery with which Germain was reproached, and of the murder by which he was to be punished for it; but this project being soon promulgated, counted as many adherents to it as there were prisoners. These wretches, in their blind cruelty, considered this horrible snare as a legitimate revenge; and saw therein a certain guarantee against future denunciations by the informers.

Germain, Pique Vinaigre, and the keeper, were the only persons ignorant of what was going to take place. The general attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the story-teller, who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only assistance which the latter could hope for; for it was almost certain that the keeper, seeing the prisoners attentive to Pique Vinaigre's story, would consider his presence as unnecessary, and would take advantage of this moment of quiet to withdraw, to get his dinner.

And so it really turned out; for, as soon as all the prisoners had come into the hall, Squelette said to the keeper: "I say, old one, Pique Vinaigre has had a good idea; he is going to tell us his story of Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux; the weather is so bad, you would not send a police-officer out of doors, and we shall wait here quietly, till it's time to go to our nests."

"That's true enough: when he is jabbering, you are quiet, and we have no occasion to keep so closely at your elbows," replied the keeper.

"Yes," rejoined Squelette, "but Pique Vinaigre asks pretty dear for story-telling; he wants twenty sous."

"Yes, the small trifle of twenty sous—a mere nothing," cried Pique Vinaigre; "yes, gentlemen, a mere nothing; for a man must be without a farthing in his pocket, who would forego the satisfaction of hearing the adventures of poor little Gringalet, of the most terrible Coupe-en-deux, and of the ruffian Gargousse. It is a story which will make your hearts bleed, and your hair stand right on end. Gentlemen, who among you cannot dispose of the trifle of one sous, or, if you prefer to count by kilogrammes, the small trifle of five centimes, to have his heart melted, and his hair frightened off his head?"

"I put in two sous," said Squelette, throwing down the money before Pique Vinaigre; "come, will the *pégre* be niggardly in paying for such amusement?" added he, looking significantly at his accomplices. Several sous were thrown down, to the great joy of Pique Vinaigre, who was thinking of his sister, while he picked them up; "eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen," cried he, as he took up the money; "go it, you rich ones, you great capitalists and other Crœsuses; make another little effort—you would not, surely, stop at thirteen; 'tis an unlucky number: only seven sous more—the small trifle of seven sous. How! gentlemen, shall it be said that the *pégre* of the Lion's Den cannot find seven sous more—seven miserable sous? Oh! gentlemen, you would make one believe you have been sent here unjustly, or that your fingers had been most unlucky."

The piercing voice and the jokes of Pique Vinaigre had awakened Germain from his reverie. As much to follow the advice of Rigolette, by making himself popular, as to give a trifling assistance to the poor devil who had evinced a desire to be of service to him, he rose, and threw a ten-sous piece at the foot of the story-teller; who cried out, pointing to the generous donor: "Ten sous, gentlemen! you see, I spoke of capitalists. Honour to that gentleman! he has behaved like a great banker, an ambassador, to further the amusement of the company. Yes, gentlemen; for it is to him that you will owe the greater part of the story of Gringalet and Coupe-en-deux—and you will thank him for it. As to the three sous over, I will earn them by imitating the voices of the different characters in the story, instead of speaking as you and I do. This is another pleasure which you will owe to this great capitalist, whom you ought to adore."

"Don't give us so much blarney, but begin," said Squelette.

"One moment, gentlemen, only one moment," said Pique Vinaigre; "it would be only fair that this great capitalist, who has given me ten sous, should have the best place, except our provost, who, of course, chooses first."

This proposal so well served the projects of Squelette, that he called out: "That's true; after myself, he should have the best place;" and the bandit gave another significant glance at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes; let him come this way," said they; "let him sit down on the front bench."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honourable society acknowledges you have a right to the first place," said Pique Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that this liberality had, really, the effect of producing a favourable change among his hateful companions, and enchanted to follow, in this way, the advice of Rigolette, Germain, notwithstanding his great repugnance to them, left his favourite place, and drew near to the story-teller. The latter, assisted by Nicholas and Barbillon, having arranged around the stove the four or five benches which were in the hall, said, with emphasis: "This is the first tier of boxes—honour where honour is due—first to the capitalist; now let all those who have paid, sit down upon the benches," gaily added Pique Vinaigre, firmly believing that, thanks to him, Germain had nothing more to fear; "and those who have not paid, may sit down on the ground, or remain standing, as they think fit."

Let us now point out the positions in which the different personages in this scene were placed. Pique Vinaigre, standing near the stove, was preparing to begin his story; near him, Squelette, also standing, and glaring at Germain, ready to pounce upon him the moment the keeper left the hall. At some distance from Germain were Nicholas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and other prisoners; among whom was remarked the man with the blue cotton cap and

the grey blouse; these occupied the outer bench. The greater number of the prisoners, grouped here and there, some seated on the ground, and others standing, leaning against the walls, composed the back-ground of the picture, lighted *à la Rembrandt*, by the three side windows, which threw strong gleams of light, with massive shades, upon faces so various in character, and so strongly marked.

We must also mention that the keeper, who, unwittingly, by his departure, was to give the signal for the murder of Germain, was standing by the door, which was half-opened.

"Are we to begin?" asked Pique Vinaigre of Squelette.

"Silence among the *pégre*," said the latter, turning half round; and then addressing himself to Pique Vinaigre, continued: "Now, begin your story; we are all listening."

A profound silence reigned throughout the hall.

CHAPTER VI.

GRINGALET AND COUPE-EN-DEUX.

Before beginning Pique Vinaigre's story, we will remind the reader, that, by a singular contrast, the majority of prisoners, notwithstanding their shameless wickedness, have a great liking to simple stories — we would not say childish ones — in which are seen, by the laws of an inexorable fatality, the oppressed revenged of his tyrant, after trials and misfortunes without number.

Far be it from us to draw the slightest parallel between corrupted people, and the poor and the honest mass; but have we not seen with what mad applause the audience of the small theatres of the *boulevards* greet the deliverance of a victim, and with what passionate maledictions they pursue the oppressor or the traitor?

We usually deride these uncultivated testimonies of sympathy for that which is good, feeble, and persecuted; of aversion for that which is powerful, unjust and cruel. It appears to us that we are wrong.

Nothing can, in itself, be more consoling than the evidence of these popular feelings.

Is it not evident, that these salutary interests might become fixed principles among those unfortunate people, whom ignorance and poverty incessantly expose to the subversive attacks of evil? Why should we not hope for every good, from a people whose good moral sense so invariably manifests itself? — from a people who, notwithstanding the magic influence of art, would never permit that a dramatic work should close by the triumph of the wicked, and by the sufferings of the just?

This fact, although disdained and mocked at, appears to us of very great importance, by reason of the tendencies which it establishes; and which, we repeat, are often even found among the most corrupted beings, when they are, as it were, *at rest*, uttered from the instigations of others, or from criminal temptations.

In a word, since men, hardened in crime, can still sometimes sympathise in the recital and in the expression of elevated sentiments, should we not thence infer, that all have, more or less, within them, a love for that which is good, and grand, and just; but that misery and brutal sottishness, by warping and stifling these divine instincts, are the primary causes of human depravity?

Is it not evident, that man generally does not become wicked, unless he is unhappy? and that to snatch a man from the terrible temptations of want, by an equitable melioration of his physical condition, would be to render practicable those virtues of which he approves?

The impression caused by the recital of Pique Vinaigre will demonstrate, or rather will illustrate, we trust, some of the ideas which we have just advanced.

Pique Vinaigre, then, began his story in the following terms, amid the profound silence in which his auditory was hushed:—

"It is some time ago, that the events occurred, of which I am about to relate the history to this honourable society. That which was called Little Poland, was not then destroyed. The honourable society knows, or it does not know, what Little Poland was."

"I know what it was," said the prisoner in the blue cap and grey blouse; "it was some small houses near the Rue de Rocher and the Rue Pepinière."

"Quite right, my boy," replied Pique Vinaigre; "and the quarter of the City, which is not, however, composed of palaces, would be, as one may say, the Rue de la Paix, or the Rue de Rivoli, compared with Little Poland. What a hole! but otherwise a famous haunt for the bandits. There were no streets in it, but alleys — no houses, but paltry ruins — no pavements, but a soft carpeting of mud and manure, which kindly prevented the noise of carriages from disturbing you, if any passed; but none did pass there. From morning till night, and, above all, from night to morning, that which one heard unceasingly, was cries of 'Watch! watch! help! help! murder!' but the watchmen did not trouble themselves. The more people were knocked on the head in Little Poland, so many the less were there to be arrested.

"You should have seen the stirring place it was. Few jewellers, or silversmiths, or bankers, lodged in that vicinity; but, to make amends, there was a numerous company of organ-grinders, mountebanks, punchinellos, and showmen of wild beasts. Among the latter, was one named Coupe-en-deux* — so wicked was he; but, above all, he was most wicked towards children. They called him Coupe-en-deux, because, 'twas said, that with an axe, and at one blow, he had cut in two a little Savoyard."

At this passage in the story of Pique Vinaigre, the prison clock struck a quarter-past three. The prisoners retire to their dormitories at four o'clock; the crime of Squelette was to be consummated before that hour.

"Ten thousand thunders!" whispered he to Gros-Boiteux; "the keeper does not leave us!"

"Don't be alarmed; when once the story is fairly set agoing, he'll be off."

Pique Vinaigre continued:—

"Nobody knew whence came Coupe-en-deux. Some said he was an Italian, some a Gypsy, some a Turk, some an African; the good women said he was a magician—although a magician in those days would appear something singular. I should myself be tempted to agree with the good women. What made them believe this, was, that he had always with him a large red monkey, called Gargousse, who was so cunning and so spiteful, one could have said the devil was in his belly. I shall presently remind you of Gargousse. As to Coupe-en-deux, I shall describe

*Cut-in-two.

him to you. His complexion was similar to that of boot-tops; his hair was red, like to his monkey's skin; his eyes were green—and what still more leads me to think, with the good women, that he was a magician—his tongue was black."

"His tongue black?" cried Barbillon.

"As black as ink," replied Pique Vinaigre.

"Why was that?"

"Because, some time before he was born, his mother, probably, had talked about a negro," rejoined Pique Vinaigre, with diffident assurance. "To this delightful acquisition, Coupe-en-deux added the profession of keeping I know not how many tortoises, monkeys, guinea-pigs, white mice, foxes, and marmots, which corresponded to an equal number of young Savoyards or deserted children. Every morning, Coupe-en-deux distributed to each of the children his animal, and a small piece of black bread, and then, 'Off with you!' to beg a halfpenny or dance a Catalina. Those who, at night, did not bring back fifteen sous, at least, were beaten; but, oh! beaten in such a way, that one could hear the children shriek from one extremity of Little Poland to the other.

"I must tell you, also, that there lived in Little Poland, a man who was called the Ancient, because he was the oldest of his species in that quarter; and who was, one may say, the mayor, the provost, the justice of the peace, or rather of war, for it was in his court—he kept an eating-house and wine-shop—they went to comb each others' heads, when there was no other means of settling a difference. Although old, the Ancient was as strong as Hercules, and much feared—they swore only by him, in Little Poland. When he said 'twas well, every one said 'twas very well—and if he said 'twas bad, all said 'twas very bad. He was, at bottom, a good man, but much feared. When, for example, people of great strength oppressed, and rendered the weak miserable—oh! then look out!

"As the Ancient was the neighbour of Coupe-en-deux, he had, when the latter first established himself, heard the children shriek on account of the blows which the wild beast showman gave them; but he said to him: 'Should I hear these children shriek again, I will make you scream in your turn; and, as your voice is stronger, I shall lay on the heavier.'"

"The Ancient was a droll fellow: I like that Ancient, I do," said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And so do I," added the keeper, drawing nearer to the group.

"Squelette could not restrain a movement of angry impatience. Pique Vinaigre continued:—

"Thanks to the Ancient, who had threatened Coupe-en-deux, the nightly cries of children were no longer heard in Little Poland, but the unfortunate innocents suffered no less; for, if they did not shriek when their master beat them, it was because they feared that, if they did, they would be beaten still more; as for complaining to the Ancient, they had not the slightest thought of it.

"By means of the fifteen sous which each little fellow brought him every day, Coupe-en-deux lodged them, boarded them, and clothed them. In the evening, a bit of black bread, as at breakfast time—so much for their board; he never gave them any clothes—so much for their clothing. He sent them up every night, pell-mell, with their animals, on the same straw, and in a garret, which they climbed into by a ladder through the trap-door—so much for their lodging. The number of animals and children being duly completed, he locked up the trap-door, and then withdrew the ladder.

"You can readily imagine the clatter and the uproar which all these monkeys, guinea-pigs, white mice, tortoises, marmots and children, made, huddled together in a garret of very small dimensions. Coupe-en-deux slept in a room below them, with his great monkey, Gargousse, tied to his bed-foot. When there was too much grumbling, or too much crying, in the garret, Coupe-en-deux rose up, took his long whip, got up the ladder, opened the trap-door, and then lashed about him in the dark, both right and left.

"As he had always about fifteen of these children—and some of them sometimes brought him as much as twenty sous per day—Coupe-en-deux, after paying all expenses, which were not very heavy, had for himself, four to five francs per day. With this, he lived right merrily; for you must remark, he was the greatest swiller upon earth, and that he was regular dead drunk, at least, once a day. This was his regimen; without it, he used to say, he would have the head-ache all the live-long day. I must tell you, though, that with his profits he used to buy sheep's-hearts for Gargousse, for his great monkey swallowed raw meat like any cannibal.

"But I see the honourable society are expecting I should say something about Gringalet; here he is, gentlemen——"

"Oh! let us see Gringalet, and then I'll go and eat my soup," said the keeper.

The Skeleton exchanged a ferocious look with Gros-Boiteux.

"Among the children whom Coupe-en-deux employed with his animals," rejoined Pique Vinaigre, "there was a poor and miserable little atom, surnamed Gringalet. Having neither father nor mother, brother nor sister—without home or friends, he found himself alone, perfectly alone, in this wide world, which he had been thrown into, without his leave being asked, and which he might quit, without attracting the slightest notice. It was not for his pleasure he was called Gringalet; no, no, for he was meagre, and puling, and suffering to a degree that excited pity. You would have thought him only seven or eight years old, although he was thirteen. If he appeared to be not half that age, it was not from ill-will on his part; for he had fared so badly—getting food, upon the average, every other day, and then so little—oh! so little, and of such bad quality—so bad, that he had succeeded marvellously well, in appearing to be even seven years old."

"Poor little fellow! I could fancy that I see him," said the prisoner in the blue cap; "there are so many children like him, half-starved, upon the streets of Paris."

"They must begin their education early," replied Pique Vinaigre, smiling bitterly, "that they may in the end be used to it."

"Come now, get on! make better way!" said the Skeleton, abruptly; "the keeper is getting out of patience; his soup is cooling."

"Ah! bah! that's no matter," said the keeper. "I wish to become better acquainted with poor Gringalet; it is so amusing."

"It is really very interesting," added Germain, who had been very attentive to the story.

"Oh! thank you, for saying that, my capi-

talist," replied Pique Vinaigre; "that gives me greater pleasure even than your ten sous piece."

"You confounded drawler! will you put an end to our suspense?" exclaimed Squelette.

"Well, don't be in such a hurry. One day, Coupe-en-deux found Gringalet in the street, dying with cold and hunger; he would have done as well to let him lie there. As Gringalet was weak, he was naturally timid; he had become the laughing-stock and suffer-all of the other boys, who beat him, and caused him so much misery, that he would have been spiteful and malicious, had not strength and courage been wanting in him. But, no; when they had beaten him, he cried, saying: 'I never did harm to any one, and every one harms me—this is unjust. Oh! were I strong and bold!' You will, perhaps, imagine that Gringalet was about to add: 'Would I not revenge myself upon those who hurt me? Well, he said no such thing! he said: 'Oh! were I strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong; for I am weak, and the strong have made me suffer.' In the mean time, being too much like a flea to prevent the strong from injuring the weak, beginning with himself, he prevented the large animals from devouring the little ones."

"Is not that a very funny idea?" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And that which was most funny," rejoined the story-teller, "was, that one would have said, with this idea, that Gringalet consoled himself for being beaten; and this proves that, at the bottom, his heart was not bad."

"By Jupiter! there can be no doubt of it—quite the contrary," said the keeper. "Isn't he amusing now, this Pique Vinaigre?"

At this moment, the clock struck half-past three. The intended executioner of Germain and Gros-Boiteux exchanged significant glances. The hour drew nigh; the keeper still remained, and some of the least hardened prisoners appeared almost to forget the sinister intentions of Squelette, to listen with profound attention to Pique Vinaigre's story.

"When I said," continued the latter, "that Gringalet prevented the larger animals from eating up the smaller ones, you will comprehend that Gringalet did not meddle with matters concerning the tigers, the lions, the wolves, or even the foxes and the monkeys belonging to the menagerie of Coupe-en-deux—he was too much afraid for that. But when he saw, for example, a spider lying in ambush in his net, to catch in it a poor, silly fly, buzzing about in the sun's lovely beams, and not doing harm to any one—crack! Gringalet with his stick, tore down the fatal web, set free the fly, and crushed the spider, like a real Cæsar—yes, like a true Cæsar—for he turned pale when touching these ugly reptiles; he acquired resolution then, for formerly he had feared a cockchafer, and had been a long time in becoming familiar even with the tortoise, which Coupe-en-deux gave him in charge each morning. Therefore, Gringalet, in overcoming the fear which spiders had occasioned him, that he might hinder the poor flies from being eaten, showed himself ——"

"Showed himself as daring, after his fashion, as a man who attacks a wolf, to snatch a sheep from its fangs," said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"Or as a man who should have attacked Coupe-en-deux, to liberate Gringalet from his clutches," added Barbillon, who was also much interested.

"Just as you say," said Pique Vinaigre; "for, after these good actions, Gringalet did not feel so miserable. He who never laughed, then smiled, and looked quite bold, wearing his cap on one side, when he had a cap, and hummed the Marseilloise with quite a conquering air. In these moments, not a spider would have dared to look him in the face. Another time it was a grasshopper which was drowning in the gutter, and Gringalet quickly immersed two of his fingers, and pulled out the insect, which he afterwards placed upon a blade of grass. A master swimmer, who had gained a medal, and who had fished up his ten drowning persons, at fifty francs a head, could not have felt prouder than Gringalet, when he saw his grasshopper kick and shake its legs, and then jump away. And yet the grasshopper gave him neither money nor a medal, and did not even say thank'ee to him, more than the fly. 'But, Pique Vinaigre,' the honourable society will say to me, 'what sort of pleasure could Gringalet, whom everybody thumped, find in being the preserver of grasshoppers, and the executioner of spiders? As others did harm to him, why should he not have revenged himself, by doing harm to others, according to his strength? for instance, by throwing flies to the spiders, that they may eat them, or by letting the grasshoppers drown themselves at leisure, or even drowning them on purpose?'"

"Yes, truly, why did he not revenge himself in that way?" said Nicholas.

"What good would that have done him?" said another.

"Why, to do them harm, because they did harm to him."

"Well, now, for my part, I can understand his liking to save flies, the poor little fellow," rejoined the man in the blue cap; "he said to himself, perhaps: 'Who knows but I may be saved in that way?'"

"Our comrade is quite right," exclaimed Pique Vinaigre; "he has given the very marrow of what I was about to place before the honourable society."

"Gringalet was not very cunning; he saw no further than the extremity of his own nose; but he had said to himself: 'Coupe-en-deux is my spider; perhaps, some day or other, somebody will do for me what I do for the poor flies—that they will destroy his web for him, and take me out of his claws:' for till then he would not have dared to think, even, of running away from his master; he would have thought himself sure of being killed.

"However, one day, when neither himself nor his tortoise had been lucky, and they had earned between them but three sous, Coupe-en-deux beat him, the poor child, so severely, that Gringalet could no longer bear it. Tired of being rebuffed and tortured by all the world, he watched the moment when the trap-door of the garret remained open, and while Coupe-en-deux was giving the animals their supper, he slid down the ladder."

"Ah! so much the better," said one of the prisoners.

"But why did he not go and complain to the Ancient?" said the blue cap; "he would have given a sound thrashing to Coupe-en-deux."

"Yes, but he did not dare to do so; he was too much afraid; he would try to run away.

Unfortunately, Coupe-en-deux had seen him; he catches hold of him by the neck, and hoists him up into the garret. This time, Gringalet, thinking of what awaited him, trembled all over him, for he was not at the end of his troubles. By-the-by, while talking of the troubles of Gringalet, I must tell you something about Gargousse, the great monkey—the favourite of Coupe-en-deux. This savage animal, indeed, was as tall as Gringalet; think, what a height for a monkey! And now I will tell you why they did not lead him about the streets, and show him like the other animals. It was because Gargousse was so spiteful and so strong, that there was only, among all these children, one boy, a native of Auvergne, a resolute chap of fourteen years of age, who, after having several times fought with him hand to hand, had at last been able to master him, to lead him, and hold him by a chain; and notwithstanding this, many times afterwards there had been several battles, in which Gargousse had bit his leader so as to make him bleed. Tired of this, the little Auvergnese said to himself one day: 'Well, well, you scoundrel monkey, I will be revenged for this.' One morning, then, he went out with his charge, as usual, and to entrap him the more surely, he bought him a sheep's heart, which he threw down to him. While Gargousse was eating it, he passed a cord through a link of his chain, tied the cord to a tree, and when the rascal of a monkey was well secured, he lays upon him such a volley of blows, given with a good thick stick!—but such a volley of blows! you might have seen the fire fly from the monkey's eyes!"

"Well done! Bravo! my little Auvergnese! Lay it on thick, my boy! Hit him hard! Break that rascally Gargousse's back!" exclaimed several of the prisoners.

"And I assure you, he hit him with good heart," rejoined Pique Vinaigre. "You should have heard how Gargousse shrieked, and grinned, and ground his teeth—jumped, vaulted here and there; but the Auvergnese followed him well with his stick, crying: 'There! there! how do you like it?' Unfortunately, monkeys are like cats—they die very hard. Gargousse was as cunning as he was spiteful. When he saw—one may well say so—what sort of wood was warming for him, and when the volley was at its greatest fury, he cut a final caper, and fell down at the foot of the tree; his limbs quivered for a moment, and then he laid, as if stone dead; he did not move more than a log. The Auvergnese required nothing further: thinking the monkey dead, he walked off, never intending to put his foot in Coupe-en-deux's quarters. But the villanous Gargousse was still watching him with his eyes nearly closed, though so unmercifully mauled. As soon as he found himself alone, and the Auvergnese at some distance, he bit the cord in two which bound him to the tree. The Boulevard Monceaux, where he had received his drubbing, was not far from Little Poland; the monkey knew his way as well as his paternoster; he put on his best legs, and, dragging his chain after him, made his way briskly to his master's house, who roared and foamed, and swore, at seeing his dear monkey so horribly belaboured. But that's not all: from that time forward, Gargousse had borne such malice against children in general, that Coupe-en-deux, who was not over tender, had not dared to give him in charge of any one, for fear of accident; for Gargousse might have strangled, or even devoured, a child; and all the little showmen, well knowing this, would rather have allowed themselves to be flayed by Coupe-en-deux, than to have gone near the monkey."

"I must, decidedly, go and eat my soup," said the keeper, taking a step towards the door; "this devilish Pique Vinaigre, would make the birds come down from the trees, to listen to him! I can't tell where he fishes out all his stories."

"At last, the keeper is off," said Squelette, whispering to Gros-Boiteux. "I am in a complete fever; a raging fire runs burning within me. Take care to form a circle round the informer; I will look after the rest!"

"Well, now, mind you behave yourselves," said the keeper, going towards the door.

"We'll be as quiet as sucking-doves," said Squelette, drawing nearer to Germain, while Gros-Boiteux and Nicholas, after having made a sign to each other, made two steps in the same direction.

"Oh! most respectable keeper, you are going away at the most interesting part of the story!" said Pique Vinaigre, in a reproachful tone.

Had it not been for Gros-Boiteux, who rapidly seized the arm of the Skeleton, the latter would have thrown himself upon Pique Vinaigre.

"How, at the most interesting part?" said the keeper, turning towards the story-teller.

"I believe you," said Pique Vinaigre; "you have no idea of what you are going to lose—the most delightful part of my story is just beginning!"

"Don't listen to him!" said Squelette, with difficulty restraining his rage; "he is not in cue, to-day. I think his story most horribly stupid."

"Horribly stupid!" exclaimed Pique Vinaigre, his self-love, as a story-teller, being wounded. "Well, keeper, I beg, I entreat you, to stop to the end of it! I have enough still, for a good quarter of an hour; and, besides, as your soup is cold already, what difference can it make to you? I shall hasten to the catastrophe, that you may have time to eat it, before we go up-stairs to the dormitories."

"Well, I will stop; but make haste," said the keeper, again drawing nearer to the speaker.

"And, without flattering myself, you are quite right in stopping. You have never heard anything like it, particularly the conclusion: there is the triumphal procession of the monkey and Gringalet, escorted by all the little showmen, and all the inhabitants of Little Poland! I do not, upon my honour, wish to play the trumpeter, but it is really superb!"

"Tell it quickly, then, my good fellow," said the keeper, coming back to the stove.

Squelette shook with rage; he almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. The hour for retiring to the bedrooms once arrived, Germain would be saved; for he did not sleep in the same ward as his implacable enemy; and the next day, as we have before said, he was to occupy one of the vacant cells, *à la pistole*. And, besides, Squelette perceived, by the interruptions made by several of the prisoners, that they were, thanks to the story of Pique Vinaigre, imbued with feelings, almost, of pity: perhaps they might not, now, be inclined to look on, with ferocious indifference, while a frightful murder was being committed—of which their impassibility would render them accomplices. Squelette could have prevented the story-teller from finishing his recital; but then his last hope of seeing

the keeper leave them, before the hour when Germain would be in safety, would at once have vanished.

"Ah! it is horribly stupid, is it?" rejoined Pique Vinaigre; "well, the honourable society will decide that question. There was not, then, in the world, a more savage animal than the great monkey, Gargousse, who was, above all, as spiteful as his master towards children. What does Coupe-en-deux decide upon, in order to punish Gringalet for wishing to run away? That you will know presently. In the mean time, as I said, he seized hold of the poor child, stuffed him back into the garret for the night, and said to him: 'To-morrow morning, when all your companions are gone, I shall be after you; and you will see what I do to those who try to run away from me.' I leave you to imagine the terrible night poor Gringalet passed, after all this: he hardly closed his eyes; he asked himself what Coupe-en-deux could do to him? By the dint of repeating this question to himself, he, at last, fell asleep—but what sleep! good heaven! he had a dream—a frightful dream; that is to say, the commencement of it was frightful—you will hear. He dreamt that he was one of those poor flies, of which he had saved so many from the spiders' webs; and that, in his turn, he had fallen into an enormous and strong web, in which he struggled with all his might, but without being able to get out of it. Presently he saw, secretly and stealthily approaching, a sort of monster, which had the face of Coupe-en-deux upon a spider's body. My poor Gringalet, as you may very well suppose, began again to struggle; but the more efforts that he made, the more did he become entangled in the web, as generally happens with the poor flies. At last, the spider got close to him—touched him—and he felt the cold and hairy claws of the horrid monster, drawing him, and winding round about him, to devour him! He gave himself up for lost; but, suddenly, he heard a kind of buzzing, clear, loud, and shrill; and he saw a lovely, golden fly, which had a sort of dart, sharp and brilliant as a diamond needle, flying, with furious looks, around the spider; and a voice—when I say a voice, you must understand, a fly's voice—a voice, which said to him: '*Poor little fly, thou hast saved flies; the spider does not* ——' Unfortunately, Gringalet started and awoke, and did not see the conclusion of the dream; notwithstanding, he felt a little reassured, and said to himself, 'Perhaps the golden fly, with his diamond dart, would have killed the spider, had but seen the end of the dream!' But Gringalet, though he did all he could to quiet and console himself; as the night wore away, his fears returned so thickly upon him, that, at last, he forgot the dream; or rather, he retained only that part of it which was terrifying—the great web in which he had been enveloped, and the enormous spider, with Coupe-en-deux's grim visage. You will readily conceive what fearful tremblings he must have undergone; only think! alone, completely alone, without a soul who would defend him! In the morning, when he saw through the small loop-hole window of the garret, the day breaking, little by little, his fears redoubled. The moment was approaching, when he was to be left alone with Coupe-en-deux: then he threw himself upon his knees, in the middle of the garret, shedding torrents of tears; he entreated his comrades to obtain pardon for him from Coupe-en-deux, or to assist him in escaping from him, if there was any chance of doing so. But no such chance! Some of them, from fear of their master, others from indifference, and the rest from sheer maliciousness, refused to render to poor Gringalet the service he asked of them."

"The miserable young rascals!" exclaimed the prisoner in the blue cap; "they had neither hearts nor souls!"

"That's true," added another; "it's quite vexatious to see this poor little fellow abandoned by all nature."

"And alone, and without any one to help him!" rejoined the blue cap. "For any one who can only stretch out his neck, without helping himself, always fills one with pity; and when one has teeth to bite with, it makes all the difference—but, i'faith! if you have tusks to show, show them, and defend yourselves, my boys!"

"That's true," said several of the prisoners.

"Tell me," said Squelette, no longer able to conceal his rage, and addressing himself to the blue cap, "will you hold your tongue, or not? Did I not order silence in the *pégre*? Am I, or am I not, the provost here?"

The only answer which the blue cap gave, was to look the Skeleton steadfastly in the face, and then made him that mocking gesture so much practised among mischievous urchins, which consists in placing on the extremity of the nose the thumb of the right hand, spreading it like a fan, and then joining to it the left hand, extended in the same elegant position. The blue cap accompanied his mute *reply* with so comical a look, that many of the prisoners burst into a loud laugh, while others, on the contrary, appeared astounded at the audacity of the new prisoner, so much was the Skeleton dreaded. The latter shook his fist at the blue cap, and said, grinding his teeth with rage: "We shall settle our accounts to-morrow."

"And I will add them up on your ugly mug. I will count up seventeen whacks upon your nose, and carry nothing."

Fearing that the keeper might find a new reason for prolonging his stay with them, in order to prevent the fray which seemed impending, the Skeleton calmly replied: "That is not the question. I have the charge of keeping order here; have I not, keeper?"

"That's very true," replied the latter. "Do not interrupt him any more; and you, Pique Vinaigre, go on. But, my good fellow, proceed a little quicker."

"Gringalet, thus finding himself abandoned by all the world," continued Pique Vinaigre, "resigned himself to his unhappy fate. The broad daylight shone upon him, and all the little boys prepared themselves to leave their garret with their animals. Coupe-en-deux opened the trap-door, and called them one by one, to give them each their morsel of black bread. All of them went down the ladder, and Gringalet, less alive than dead, remained huddled up in one corner of the garret, with his tortoise, and was almost as motionless. He looked at his companions as they descended, one after the other, and would have given all he had to do as they did. At length the last had left the garret. The poor child's heart beat violently. He hoped that, perhaps, his master might forget him; but no such luck. All at once, he hears Coupe-en-deux, who had remained at the foot of the ladder, calling, with his gruff voice: 'Gringalet! Gringalet!' 'Here I am, my master.' 'Come down

directly, or I'll come and fetch you,' rejoined Coupe-en-deux. Gringalet now thought himself at his last hour. 'Come, come,' said he to himself, though trembling in every joint, and remembering his dream; 'you are now in the web, poor little fly, and the spider is going to eat you.' After having very gently put his tortoise on the ground, he said a sort of farewell to it; for he had at length become attached to the animal. He approached the trap-door, and placed his foot on the top round of the ladder, to go down, when Coupe-en-deux, seizing him by his little leg, as meagre as a spindle, dragged him with such force and suddenness, that Gringalet came down at full run, and scraped his face along the whole length of the ladder."

"What a pity that the Ancient of Little Poland had not been there! what a dance he would have given to Coupe-en-deux!" said the blue cap. "It is in such moments as that, that it is good to have great strength."

"Yes, my brave fellow! yes; but, unfortunately, the Ancient was not there. Coupe-en-deux then caught the child by the band of his trousers, and carried him into his own filthy room, where he kept the great monkey chained to the foot of his bed. At the mere sight of the child, the savage animal began to jump and bound about, to grind his teeth like a mad beast, and to spring the whole length of his chain towards Gringalet, as if he wanted to devour him. Poor Gringalet! how will he get out of this? If he falls within the grip of the monkey, he will at once be strangled!"

"Thunder and lightning! but this makes one's flesh creep!" exclaimed the blue cap. "At this moment, I could not hurt even a flea! What say you, my friends?"

"Faith, nor could I"—"Nor I"—"Nor I," exclaimed several of the prisoners.

At this moment, the prison clock struck three-quarters past three.

Squelette, fearing more and more that he would not have time enough, cried out, furiously, on hearing these interruptions, which seemed to announce that several of the prisoners were much softened by the story: "Silence in the *pégre!* This teller of dismal stories will never get to the end of it, if you talk as much as he does."

Pique Vinaigre continued: "When one reflects that Gringalet had great difficulty in even accustoming himself to his tortoise, and that the most courageous of his comrades trembled at the very name of Gargousse, you can conceive his terror when carried by his master close to this villanous monkey. 'Pardon, my master—pardon!' cried he, his teeth chattering as if he had the ague; 'pardon, master! I will never do so again—I promise you I will not!' The poor little fellow cried, 'I will never do so again,' without knowing what he said; for he could not reproach himself with doing any harm. But Coupe-en-deux paid very little attention to this. In spite of the cries of the child, who struggled to get from him, he placed him within the reach of Gargousse, who instantly seized upon him."

A sort of thrill ran through the audience, who became more and more attentive.

"How stupid I should have been, to have gone away!" said the keeper, approaching still nearer to the group of prisoners.

"And this is nothing yet; the most touching part has still to come," said Pique Vinaigre. "As soon as Gringalet felt the cold and clammy paws of the great monkey, who caught him by the neck and by the head, he thought he would be swallowed up at once. He became almost delirious, and screamed and groaned in such a way as would have softened even a tiger. 'The spider of my dream! Oh, my good God! the spider of my dream! Help! help! little gold-fly! help! help!' 'Will you hold your tongue?' said Coupe-en-deux, kicking him violently, for he was afraid his screams might, perhaps, be heard. But, a moment afterwards, there was no cause for fear; poor Gringalet neither cried nor struggled any more. Upon his knees, and pale as a sheet, he shut his eyes, and trembled in every limb, as if it had been the middle of January. During this time, the monkey beat him, pulled his hair, and scratched his face; and, from time to time, the spiteful beast stopped, for a minute, to look at his master, precisely as though they understood each other. Coupe-en-deux laughed so heartily, so loudly, that, if Gringalet had shrieked, his master's laugh would have completely drowned his cries. One would have said, that this encouraged Gargousse, who seemed more bent on hurting Gringalet than ever."

"Ah! you beastly monkey!" exclaimed the blue cap; "if I had held you by the tail, I would have twirled you like a sling, and would have dashed your head against the pavement!"

"That rascally monkey was as wicked as a man."

"There are no men so wicked as all this!"

"Not so wicked?" replied Pique Vinaigre; "you forget Coupe-en-deux. Only think of him: I'll tell you what he did afterwards. He unfastened Gargousse's chain, which was a long one, from the end of the bed, and, for a moment, took the child, more dead than alive, out of the clutches of the monkey, and fastened him to the chain, so that Gringalet was at one end of it, and Gargousse at the other; both being fastened by the middle of the body, and having about three feet of it between them. There's a contrivance for you!"

"'Tis true, there are some men more savage than the most savage beasts."

"When Coupe-en-deux had accomplished this great feat, he said to his monkey, which appeared to understand all he said—and, truly, they were so well matched, they ought to have understood each other: 'Attention, Gargousse! you have been led about, it is now your turn to lead Gringalet. He shall be your monkey. Get up, Gringalet, or I'll order Gargousse to seize upon you.' The poor child had again fallen upon his knees, and with uplifted hands, but was not able to speak, his teeth chattering so loudly. 'Here! make him walk!' said Coupe-en-deux to his monkey; 'if he is unruly, do to him as I do:' and at the same moment, he gave the child a volley of stripes, with a cane, and then handed it to the monkey. You know these animals are, by their nature, great imitators; but Gargousse was more so than any other of his species. Well, then, he seized the cane in one paw, and laid it upon Gringalet, who was then compelled to get upon his feet, and, when upright, was not taller than the monkey. Then Coupe-en-deux went out of his room, and going down the stairs, called to Gargousse, who followed him, driving before him Gringalet, beating him all the time. They arrived, in this order, in the yard belonging to Coupe-en-deux's tenement. It was here he expected most to

[Chourineur attacking the Skeleton.]

divert himself. He shut the door of the alley, and made signs to Gargousse to drive the poor boy round the yard. The monkey obeyed his master, and set to work, racing him round and round, and beating him with the cane, while Coupe-en-deux was holding his sides with laughter. Perhaps you'll think that this cruelty ought to have sufficed; but, no, indeed, all this was nothing yet. Gringalet, up to this time, had got off with a few scratches, a good caning, and a most dreadful fright.

"Coupe-en-deux set to work to imagine something further. To make the monkey still more savage against the child, who was quite out of breath, he catches Gringalet by the hair, and makes believe to bite him, and throws him back to Gargousse, crying: 'Seize him—seize him!' and then shows him a piece of sheep's-heart, as if to tell him that would be his reward. Oh! then, my friends, 'twas a most frightful spectacle. Imagine to yourselves, a great red monkey, his muzzle black as ink, grinding his teeth like a maniac, and leaping furiously, almost rabid, upon that poor unfortunate, who, not being able to defend himself, was knocked down by the first blow, and had turned himself upon his face, to prevent its being torn by this savage monster. Seeing this, Gargousse, whom his master kept urging on against the child, got upon his back, seized him by the neck, and bit him till the blood came. 'Oh! the spider of my dream! the spider!' cried Gringalet, with a suffocated voice. Suddenly, a voice was heard at the door—knock! knock! knock!"

"'Tis the Ancient come at last!" cried several of the prisoners, joyfully; "he has come at last!"

"Yes, my friends, this time it was he! he called from the outside of the prison: 'Open the door! open the door! Coupe-en-deux, pretend not to be deaf, for I can see you through the key-

hole!' The menagerie man being obliged to answer, went, grumbling, to open the door for the Ancient, who, despite his fifty years, was still as solid as an oak, with whom no one dare joke when he was angry. 'What do you want with me?' said Coupe-en-deux, opening the door halfway. 'I want to speak to you,' replied the Ancient, who almost forced his way into the little yard; and then, seeing the monkey still bent on biting Gringalet, he seized Gargousse by the neck, and was about to drag him from the child, and pitch him ten yards off, when he perceived that the child was chained to the monkey. Seeing this, he gave a terrible look at Coupe-en-deux, and cried out to him: 'Come, instantly, and unchain this unhappy child!' You will conceive the joy, the surprise of Gringalet, who, half dead with fear, all at once found himself, as it were, by a miracle, saved from the clutches of his enemy. He could not help remembering the golden fly of his dream, although the Ancient had nothing like a fly about him, nor anything approaching it."

"Come," said the keeper, taking a step once more towards the door, "as Gringalet is saved, I'll go and eat my soup."

"Saved!" rejoined Pique Vingaire, "saved! yes, certainly, he was saved! but he is not yet at the end of his great troubles, the poor Gringalet!"

"Not yet?" said some of the prisoners, with much interest.

"But what more can happen to him?" said the keeper,

"Stay where you are, and you will hear, replied the story-teller.

"This devilish Pique Vinaigre makes one do just as he pleases," said the keeper; "faith, I'll stop a little longer."

Squelette remained silent, but foamed with rage.

Pique Vinaigre continued: "Coupe-en-deux, who feared the Ancient as he feared the devil, although grumbling all the while, detached Gringalet from his chain; when that was done, the Ancient threw Gargousse high up into the air, and as he came down again, received him with a kick in the loins, which sent him rolling ten yards off; the monkey howled as if he had been burnt, gnashed his teeth, and nimbly scampering off, jumped upon the roof of a small shed, from whence he shook his fist at the Ancient. 'Why do you beat my monkey?' said Coupe-en-deux to the Ancient. 'You should rather ask, why I don't beat you!—to make this poor child suffer in this way! You have got drunk very early this morning!' 'I am not more drunk than you are yourself. I was teaching my monkey a new trick. I want to give a scene in which he and Gringalet are to appear together. I am attending to my business: what right have you to meddle with it?' 'I meddle in what concerns me! This morning, not seeing Gringalet pass before my door, with the other children, I asked them where he was. They did not answer me, but looked confused. I know you well; I guessed that you were ill-using him, and I was not mistaken. Mark me well: every time I do not see Gringalet with the others, I shall be here on the instant, and you must show him to me, or otherwise I'll knock you on the head.' 'I shall do as I choose. You have no business to order me about,' replied Coupe-en-deux, irritated at this threat of being spied upon. 'You shall knock nothing on the head, and if you do not take yourself off immediately, or if you dare to come back again ——' Whack! whack! went the Ancient, interrupting Coupe-en-deux's threatening with two boxes on the ear, that would have stunned a rhinoceros. 'Take that: you deserve it for answering the Ancient of Little Poland so insolently.'"

"Two boxes on the ear! that was slim work," said the blue cap. "If I had been the Ancient, I would have given him a fatter mess of soup than that."

"And he would not have stolen it," added one of the prisoners.

"The Ancient could have eaten ten such as Coupe-en-deux," continued Pique Vinaigre. "The menagerie man was, therefore, obliged to pocket quietly the two boxes on the ear; but he was not the less enraged, and, above all, at being beaten before Gringalet. He even, at that very moment, resolved to be revenged; and he conceived a plan which only a demon of wickedness, like himself, could have imagined. While ruminating on this idea, rubbing his ears all the while, to allay their tingling, the Ancient said to him: 'Recollect, that if you should continue to ill-treat this child, I will oblige you to decamp from Little Poland, you, and all your animals; and if you do not start when I command you, I will bring all the inhabitants about your ears. You know they detest you enough already. And in that case, they shall give you a procession, of which your back will long bear testimony, I'll answer for it.' The rascally traitor, in order to execute his horrid scheme, instead of continuing angry with the Ancient, played the fawning dog, and said to him, in a coaxing way: 'Now, 'pon my faith, good Ancient, you were in the wrong to beat me, and to think that I was doing harm to Gringalet; quite the contrary. I tell you again, I was teaching the monkey a new trick; he is not good-tempered, if he becomes obstinate; and, if, in the scuffle, the boy has been bitten, I am sorry for it.' 'Hem!' ejaculated the Ancient, looking askew at Coupe-en-deux; 'is what you tell me really true? Besides, if you wanted to teach your monkey a trick, why did you fasten him to Gringalet?' 'Because Gringalet is to play his part in the trick. I will tell you what I am going to do. I shall dress up Gargousse in a red coat, and hat and feathers, like a Swiss mountebank, selling quack medicine. I shall make Gringalet sit down in a small chair, with a napkin tied round his neck, and the monkey, with a large wooden razor, will appear to be shaving him.' The Ancient could not help laughing at this idea. 'Won't it be funny?' rejoined Coupe-en-deux, with a sardonic grin. 'Tis really quite comical,' said the Ancient; 'and more so, as they say your devilish monkey is cunning enough to do anything.' 'I believe you. When he has seen me three or four times pretending to shave Gringalet, he will mimic me with his great wooden razor; but to do this, he must be accustomed to the boy, and therefore I have fastened them together.' 'But why did you pitch upon Gringalet for this, rather than one of the other boys?' 'Because he is the smallest of them all; and when he is sitting down, Gargousse is taller than he is. And, besides, I intended giving half the profits to Gringalet.' 'Oh! if that's the case,' said the Ancient, deceived by the hypocrisy of Coupe-en-deux, 'I am sorry for the whacks I gave you. You must, therefore, consider them as payment in advance for the next fault you may commit.'

During the time that his master was speaking to the Ancient, Gringalet, hardly daring to breathe, trembled like a leaf, and would have given the world had he dared to throw himself at the Ancient's feet, to entreat him to take him away with him. But his courage failed him, and he began to despair again, saying to himself: 'I shall be like the poor fly in my dream; the spider will devour me. I was wrong when I believed that the gold-fly would save me.' 'Come, my boy, take courage. As Father Coupe-en-deux intends to give you half what you receive, you ought to get accustomed to the monkey. Bah! bah! you'll soon get used to him; and if you earn plenty of money, you will have nothing to complain of.' 'He complain! Have you anything to complain of?' said Coupe-en-deux to Gringalet, looking at him sideways, with such a horrible expression, that the poor boy wished himself under ground a hundred feet. 'No, no, master,' replied he, stammering. 'You see clearly, Ancient,' said Coupe-en-deux, 'he has never had reason to complain. I wish only for his good, after all. If Gargousse has scratched him the first time, he will never do it again, I promise you; I will look to that.' 'That's all right; and in this way you will both be satisfied.' 'And Gringalet better than I shall. Won't this satisfy you?' 'Yes, yes, my master,' said the boy, still trembling. 'And to console you for your scratches, you shall have your share in a good breakfast which the Ancient is going to send me—a dish of cutlets, with pickled cucumbers, four bottles of wine, and a gallon of brandy.' 'At your service, Coupe-en-deux; my cellar and my kitchen shine for all the world.' At the bottom the Ancient was a good man; but he was not over bright, and he liked to sell his wine and his cookery too. The rascally Coupe-en-deux well knew this. You see that he managed to send him off quite satisfied, by ordering something to eat and drink, and had quite pacified him as to Gringalet. Once more, then, had the poor boy fallen into the power of his wretched master. As soon as the Ancient had turned his back, Coupe-en-deux showed the little sufferer the staircase, and ordered him quickly to regain his garret. There was no occasion to tell him twice, for he was too terrified to hesitate. 'Oh, my good God! I am lost!' cried he, throwing himself upon the straw beside his tortoise, and weeping bitterly. He had been there a good hour, sobbing and crying, when he heard the gruff voice of his master, calling him. What increased the fear of Gringalet was, that he thought his master's voice sounded otherwise than usual. 'Will you come down instantly!' cried Coupe-en-deux, swearing the most dreadful oaths. The boy hastened to get down the ladder. He had hardly got to the bottom, when his master, who staggered at every step—for Coupe-en-deux had drank so much, that he was as drunk as a pig, and could hardly stand upon his legs; his body rolled, first on one side, then on the other; and he looked at Gringalet with such fierce eyes—so ferociously! but did not say a word; his tongue, as the saying is, was too thick to speak. The child had never been so frightened. Gargousse was chained to the foot of the bed. In the middle of the room was a chair with a cord hanging over the back of it. 'S-s-sit down there,' continued Pique Vinaigre, imitating, until the end of the story, the stammerings of a drunken man, whenever he repeated what Coupe-en-deux had said.

"Gringalet sat down trembling; then Coupe-en-deux wound the great cord round him, and tied him to the chair, and not very easily; for although he still retained his *sight* and some slight perceptions of what he was about, you will easily conceive that he made his knots double. At last, Gringalet was firmly tied into the chair. 'Oh! good heaven!' murmured he, 'nobody will come to deliver me this time.' Poor little fellow! he was right; nobody could come, as you will see. The Ancient had gone away perfectly tranquillised; Coupe-en-deux had double locked and bolted the door of the yard; nobody could, therefore, come to the assistance of Gringalet."

The prisoners burst out into various exclamations, so much had their feelings been aroused by the story. One said: "Oh! poor Gringalet; this time you are lost indeed." Others cried out: "Poor little fellow!" "What a pity!" "If twenty sous would save him, I would give it!" "And I too!" "That miserable wretch, Coupe-en-deux!" "What can he be going to do to him?"

Pique Vinaigre went on: "When Gringalet was securely fastened into his chair, his master said to him: 'Ah, you young rascal!—you, you were the cause—that, that I-I was b-b-beaten by the An-An-Ancient—you-you-you are going to die f-f-for it.' And he drew from his pocket a large razor, which had been newly sharpened, opened it, and then with one hand catching Gringalet by the hair ——"

A murmur of indignation and of horror was uttered by nearly all the prisoners, which interrupted for a moment Pique Vinaigre, who continued: "On seeing the razor, the boy cried out: 'Pardon, master! pardon! Do not kill me!' 'Cry, cry away! gro-groan as you will! you will not cry long,' said Coupe-en-deux. 'Help! help! gold-fly!' screamed poor Gringalet, almost beside himself, and thinking of the dream which had left such an impression upon him. 'Here is the spider going to kill me!' 'Ha! ha! you call me spider, do you?' said Coupe-en-deux; 'for that, and oth-other th-things, you shall die—but—no-not by my hand—be-because—the-thing—and th-then they—might guil-guillotine me. I will say—and I c-can prove it—was the monkey—I—je-just now pre-pre-pared the thing—but—n-no matter,' said Coupe-en-deux, with difficulty keeping on his legs. Then calling his monkey, who, having drawn as close to his master and Gringalet as his chain would allow him, and grinding his teeth, was looking first at one, and then at the other. 'Here, Gargousse,' said Coupe-en-deux, showing the monkey the razor, and pointing to Gringalet, 'you will do se to him—d'ye see?' And he passed the back of the razor several times over Gringalet's throat. The devilish monkey was such a mimic, so spiteful, and so cunning, that he understood what his master meant; and, as if to show him that he did, he took hold of his own chin with his right paw, threw back his head, and made a sign as if cutting his throat. 'Tha-that's it, Ga-Ga-Gargousse! you've hit it,' said Coupe-en-deux, stammering more than ever, and half-shutting his eyes. He then staggered so violently, that he was near falling, with Gringalet, chair and all. 'Ye-yes, that's it; I wi-will unchain you, an—and you will cut his win-wind-pipe, wo-wo-won't you, Ga-Ga-Gargousse?' The monkey screamed and grinned, as if to say yes, and put

out his paw to take the razor, which Coupe-en-deux held out to him. 'Help! gold-fly! help!' groaned Gringalet, with a dying voice, certain that he was now at his last hour; for, alas! he called the gold-fly to his assistance, without expecting it, or hoping it; but he said it as a drowning man would say, 'My God! my God!' Well, he was wrong to doubt it, for, would you believe it? at that very moment Gringalet saw, flying in, through the open window, one of those little flies, all green and gold, of which there are so many. One would have said it was a spark of fire flying about; and, just at the very instant when Coupe-en-deux had given the razor to the monkey, the gold-fly darted straight into the right eye of the cruel ruffian. A fly in one's eye is no great thing; but, at the moment, you well know, it feels as sharp as a needle, and therefore Coupe-en-deux, who could scarcely stand, clapped one hand to his eye so suddenly, and with so violent a movement, that he staggered, tripped over something on the floor, and fell at full length upon the ground, and rolled over to the foot of the bed, to which Gargousse was chained. 'Thanks, gold-fly! thanks! thou hast saved me!' exclaimed Gringalet; for, although sitting down, and fastened to his chair, he had seen it all."

"That's true, i'faith, the gold-fly prevented him from having his throat cut!" cried the prisoners, with glee.

"Long life to the gold-fly!" cried blue cap.

"Long life to the gold-fly!" shouted several of the prisoners.

"Long life to Pique Vinaigre and his stories!" exclaimed another.

"Wait a little," rejoined the story-teller; "the grandest and most terrible part of the story is yet to come. Coupe-en-deux had fallen to the ground, like so much lead, he was so drunk—so drunk that he lay as motionless as a log, he was altogether senseless; but, in falling, he had almost crushed Gargousse, and had very nearly broken one of his hind-legs. You know how spiteful, revengeful, and malicious, this horrid monkey was. He still held the razor which his master had given him to cut Gringalet's throat. What does my rascal of a monkey do, when he perceives his master stretched upon his back, as motionless as a drowned carp, and well within his reach? Why, he jumps upon him, squats down upon his chest, with one of his paws stretches the skin of his neck, and with the other —crack! he cuts his throat as neatly as a whistle, as he had been taught by Coupe-en-deux to do to Gringalet."

"Bravo!"

"Well done, monkey!"

"Hurrah for Gargousse!" enthusiastically cried the prisoners.

"Long life to the little gold-fly!"

"Long life to Gringalet!"

"Long life to Gargousse!"

"Well, my good friends," said Pique Vinaigre, enchanted at the applause his story had received, "as you have shouted now, so did the inhabitants of Little Poland, an hour after these events had taken place."

"How was that? What for?"

"I told you that Coupe-en-deux, in order to execute his murderous plan quite at his ease, had well secured his door. At dusk, then, as was customary, the boys returned home with their animals, arriving there one after the other. The first that came, knocked at the door; no one answered. They remained there some time; at last they were all assembled, and knocked more loudly than before: not a soul appeared. One of them went and told the Ancient how long they had been knocking, and that their master did not let them in. 'The devil!' said the Ancient; 'I sent the wine and brandy that he ordered, and the rascal must be as drunk as any Dutchman. We must break open the door, for these poor boys can't remain all night in the street.' The door was broken open with sledge-hammers; they entered, they went upstairs, they ran into the room, and what did they see there? Gargousse, chained, and squatting down upon his master's body, playing with the razor. Poor Gringalet, fortunately out of the reach of the monkey's chain, was still sitting, and fastened to the chair, not daring to look on the dead body of Coupe-en-deux, and gazing at—guess what—the little gold-fly; which, after having buzzed around the poor little boy, as 'twere to congratulate him on his escape, had alighted on one of his small hands. Gringalet related to the Ancient, and to the crowd that followed him, all that had taken place; they all declared that it appeared a miracle from heaven; and the Ancient himself cried out: 'A triumphal procession for Gringalet! A triumphal procession for Gargousse, who killed that murderous monster Coupe-en-deux! He cut others, in his turn, he has had his throat cut.' 'Yes! yes!' shouted the crowd, for the menagerie man was detested by everybody. 'A triumphal procession for Gargousse! a triumphal procession for Gringalet!' It was now dark; they lighted torches of straw; they strapped Gargousse upon a bench, which four lads carried upon their shoulders. The spiteful monkey did not appear to take much pleasure in it, but he assumed some airs of triumph, by showing his teeth to the crowd. After the monkey marched the Ancient, carrying Gringalet in his arms; all his companions, each carrying his animal, surrounded the good Ancient; some played the hurdy-gurdy, some the organ, and a few Auvergnese charcoal-sellers played upon their bagpipes. It would be difficult to describe the joy they testified, the racket that they made. It was, in fact, a perfect *fête*. After the musicians, came all the inhabitants of Little Poland, men, women, and children, all of them bearing torches of straw, and shouting like mad people, 'Long life to Gringalet!' The procession, in this order, marched round and round the house of Coupe-en-deux. It was a curious spectacle, to see those old, miserable houses, and all those faces, lighted up by the red glare of those straw torches, which flamed so fitfully. As to Gringalet, the first thing that he did, when once at liberty, was to put his little gold-fly into a paper box, and all the time of his triumphal procession, he kept on repeating: 'Little flies, I did well to prevent the spiders from devouring you ——'"

The end of Pique Vinaigre's story was interrupted, by some one calling from outside the room: "Come, Father Rousselle, and eat your soup. In ten minutes, it will be four o'clock."

"Well, the story is just finished. I will go. Thank you, my good fellow. You have amused me capitally, I assure you, and you may feel proud of it," said the keeper to Pique Vinaigre, as he moved towards the door. He then stopped, and, turning round to the prisoners, said: "But now I expect you will be orderly."

"We are going to hear the end of the story,

said Squelette, panting with restrained rage. He then whispered to Gros-Boiteux: "Go to the door, follow the keeper with your eyes, till he is out of the yard; then cry, 'Gargousse!' and the informer is dead."

"I'll do so," said Gros-Boiteux; and he went to the door to look after the keeper.

"I was telling you, then," continued Pique Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, during the whole time of his triumphal procession, was saying to himself: 'Little flies, I ——'"

"Gargousse!" shouted Gros-Boiteux, turning round. He had just seen the keeper leaving the yard.

"Have at you, Gringalet! I will be your spider," instantly exclaimed Squelette, throwing himself so precipitately, and with so much force, upon Germain, that the latter could neither make a movement to defend himself, or utter even a cry. His voice expired under the terrible pressure of the long and iron fingers of the Skeleton.

"If you are the spider, I will be the gold-fly, unlucky Skeleton!" exclaimed a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised by the violent and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, was thrown back on his bench, delivered to the fury of the ruffian, who, with one knee on his chest, had seized him by the throat. "Yes! I will be the fly, and a famous fly, too!" reiterated the man in the blue cap, whom we have already mentioned; then, with a furious bound, he threw down three or four of the prisoners, who were between him and Germain, and darting at Squelette, administered such a shower of blows upon his head, and between his eyes, and with such frightful rapidity, that they sounded like the loud beating of a hammer upon an anvil. The man in the blue cap, who was no other than Chourineur himself, while redoubling the velocity of his *hammering* upon the head of Squelette, added: "This is the shower of blows which M. Rodolph planted on my *turnip!* I have kept them till now."

At this unexpected aggression, the prisoners remained thunderstruck, and without taking part either for or against Chourineur. Many among them, still under the salutary influence of Pique Vinaigre's story, were even well satisfied with this incident, which might, perhaps, save Germain.

Squelette, who at first was stunned, and staggering like an ox under the blow of the butcher's heavy sledge, mechanically stretched out both his hands before him, to ward off the blows his enemy was giving him. This released Germain from the death-like grip of the Skeleton, and he was enabled to raise himself up a little.

"What is the matter? who is he so mad against this ruffian?" cried Gros-Boiteux; and rushing behind Chourineur, he tried to seize hold of both his arms, while the latter was making violent efforts to keep Squelette down upon the bench. The defender of Germain replied to the attack of Gros-Boiteux by so violent a kick, that it sent him rolling to the extremity of the circle formed by the prisoners. Germain, whose face was of a livid and bluish paleness, was kneeling, almost choked, beside the bench, and did not appear to have any consciousness of what was passing around him. The strangling had been so violent and so painful, that he could scarcely breathe.

The stunning effect of the first blows having subsided, Squelette, by a desperate effort, succeeded in releasing himself from Chourineur, and got upon his legs. Panting with rage and hate, his appearance was absolutely frightful. His cadaverous face streamed with blood; his upper lip was curled like that of an enraged wolf, and showed both rows of teeth set firmly against each other. He at last cried out, in a voice palpitating with fury and fatigue, for his struggle with Chourineur had been most violent: "Dash him to pieces!—that ruffian there! you set of cowards, to allow me to be so treacherously attacked! if not, the informer will escape us."

During this sort of truce, Chourineur, snatching up Germain, who was half-fainting, had manœuvred skilfully enough to gradually get near the angle of a wall, where he placed his charge. Profiting by this excellent position for acting on the defensive, Chourineur could, without fearing an attack from the rear, hold out some time against the prisoners, in whom the courage and herculean strength he had just displayed, inspired much respect.

Pique Vinaigre, being frightened, disappeared during the tumult, without any one noticing his absence.

Observing the hesitation of the greater number of the prisoners, Squelette cried out: "Follow me then—let us smash them both—the big one and the little one!"

"Take care," replied Chourineur, preparing himself for the combat, both fists advanced and squared before his broad and manly chest. "Take care of yourself, Squelette! If you want to play the Coupe-en-deux again, I'll play Gargousse, and slit your weasand for you!"

"Fall upon him, then!" cried Gros-Boiteux, getting up; "why does this furious fellow defend the informer? Death to the informer, and to him, too! If he defends him, he is a traitor!"

"Yes! yes!"

"Death to the informer!"

"Yes, death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the shouts of the most hardened of the prisoners. Another party, more tender-hearted, cried out: "No! let him be heard first!"

"Let him explain himself!"

"A man is not to be killed without being heard!"

"And defenceless, too!"

"We must be real Coupe-en-deux's to do it!"

"So much the better!" replied Gros-Boiteux and the partisans of the Skeleton.

"Nothing is too bad for an informer!"

"Death to him!"

"Let us fall upon them!"

"Let us support Squelette!"

"Yes, yes! rough music to the blue cap!"

"No! let us support the blue cap—rough music to the Skeleton!" replied Chourineur's party.

"No! down with the blue cap!"

"Down with the Skeleton!"

"Bravo, my boys!" cried Chourineur, addressing those who had sided with him; "you have hearts—you would not massacre a man, half dead already! They are cowards who would do so! To Squelette, it can make no difference—he is condemned beforehand—he knows what fate he'll have, and it is that which makes him push you on. But, if you help to kill Germain, you will be sorely served. Besides, I have something to propose: Squelette wants to finish this young man—well! let him come and take him from me, if he has the pluck

to do it!—we'll fight it out between ourselves—we will have a tousel, and you shall see who's the best man. But he dares not—he is like Coupe-en-deux, strong with the weak!"

Chourineur's vigour, his energy, and his commanding countenance, produced a powerful effect upon the prisoners, a good number of whom arrayed themselves on his side, and surrounded Germain. Squelette's party arranged themselves round him. A bloody conflict was about commencing, when, all at once, they heard the sounding and measured footsteps of a picquet of infantry, always on guard in the prison. Pique Vinaigre, taking advantage of the confusion that prevailed, had slipped into the yard, run to the wicket of the lodge, and warned the keepers of what was going on. The arrival of the soldiers brought this scene to a conclusion.

Germain, Squelette, and Chourineur, were taken before the director of the prison; the first to lodge his complaint, the two others to answer an accusation of having caused a disturbance in the prison. The terror and the sufferings of Germain had been so poignant, he was so overcome by them, that he was obliged to have the assistance of two persons, to reach a room next to the director's, where they conducted him. Reaching this, he fainted. His throat was so excoriated, that on it could be traced the impression of the iron fingers of the Skeleton. A few moments more, and Rigolette's affianced husband would have been strangled.

The keeper who had charge of the parlour, and whom we have said had always felt much interest in Germain, was the first to render him assistance. When the latter came to himself, when reflection had succeeded to the turmoil of violent and terrible emotions, which had hardly left him the use of reason, his first thought was of his deliverer. "Thank you, for your kindness, sir," said he to the keeper; "had it not been for that courageous man, I should have been lost."

"How do you feel, now?"

"Better. Oh! all that has just occurred, seems to me like a horrid dream!"

"Keep yourself quiet."

"And where is he who saved me?"

"In the director's office; he is relating to him how the attack began. It appears that, without his aid——"

"I should have been murdered. Oh! pray tell me his name, who is he?"

"I do not know; he is surnamed Chourineur. He has been at the galleys."

"The crime which now brings him here is, perhaps, not a very grave one?"

"Very grave! a robbery, with breaking into a house at night, and in an inhabited house!" said the keeper. "He will most likely have the same dose as Pique Vinaigre—fifteen or twenty years in the galleys and the pillory, seeing it is not his first offence."

Germain shuddered; he would rather have been bound by ties of gratitude to a less criminal man. "Oh! this is dreadful!" he exclaimed; "and yet this man, without even knowing me, took upon him to defend me with so much courage and generosity!"

"It so happens, that now and then there is good feeling among these people. The most important part of it is, that you are saved. To-morrow, you will have your cell, *à la pistole;* and for to-night, you'll sleep in the infirmary, by order of the director. So cheer up, sir! the bad times are past. When your pretty little visitor shall come again to see you, you can comfort her; for when once you get into your cell, you have nothing more to fear. Only, I think 'twould be as well not to mention to her anything about the scene which has just taken place: she would become ill from fright."

"Oh! certainly, I should not think of saying a word to her about it. But I much wish to thank my good deliverer; as guilty as he may be in the eyes of the law, yet I owe my life to him."

"Stay; I hear him just coming out of the room of the director, who is now going to examine Squelette. I shall have to take them both back again soon, Squelette to the black-hole, and Chourineur to the Lion's Den. He will, moreover, be somewhat rewarded for what he has done for you; for as he is a powerful and resolute fellow—as a man must be to take the lead among these outlaws—he will probably succeed the Skeleton as provost over them."

Chourineur, having crossed a small passage into which the director's room opened, came into the room where Germain was.

"Wait for me here," said the keeper to Chourineur; "I will go and see what the director decides on doing with Squelette, and I will come back to fetch you. Here is our young man, quite himself again: he wishes to thank you, and he has good reason; for without you, he would have been completely done for." The keeper left the room.

The countenance of Chourineur was radiant with happiness; he joyfully drew near to Germain. "Thunder!" exclaimed he, "but I am glad to have saved you!" and holding out his hand to Germain.

The latter, from a feeling of involuntary repugnance, drew back a little, instead of taking the hand which Chourineur held out to him; and then remembering, that after all, he owed his life to this man, he wished to make amends for this first feeling of reluctance. But Chourineur had perceived it; a sudden gloom passed over his expressive features, and, in his turn, drawing back from Germain, he said, with bitter feeling: "Ah! I had forgot—I beg your pardon, sir!"

"No; it is I who out to ask your pardon. Am I not a prisoner, like yourself? I ought only to think of the great service you have rendered me; you saved my life. Your hand, sir. Nay, I beg you—I entreat—give me your hand."

"I thank you; but now 'tis useless—the first impulse is everything. Had you at once given me a shake of the hand, it would have pleased me; but, when I reflect upon it, it is I who ought no longer to wish for it: not that I am a prisoner like yourself, but," added he, with a mournful look, and hesitating, "because, before I came here, I was——"

"The keeper told me all," replied Germain, interrupting him; "but you have not less saved my life."

"I only did my duty, and what pleased me; for I know who you are, M. Germain."

"You know me!"

"A little, nephew, I should say, if I were your uncle," said Chourineur, falling back into his usual careless tone; "and you would be very wrong to imagine that my arrival at La Force, has been the effect of chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been in prison."

Germain looked at Chourineur with profound surprise. "What then, is it because you know me ——"

"That I am here a prisoner in La Force."

"I would wish to believe you, but ——"

"You do not believe me?"

"I mean to say that it is impossible for me to understand how I could have anything to do with your imprisonment."

"Anything to do? you have everything to do with it."

"Can I have been so unfortunate?"

"Unfortunate! quite the contrary; it is I who am indebted to you, and furiously too."

"To me! indebted to me!"

"Yes, and a thumping candle, too,* for having procured me the advantage of making a trip to La Force."

"Really," replied Germain, passing his hand across his forehead, "I do not know whether the dreadful shock I received just now, has disturbed my reason, but it is impossible to understand you. The keeper has just told me that you were brought here as being accused of ——" Germain hesitated.

"Of robbery, i'faith; why do you hesitate?—of robbery, and breaking into a house, and climbing up into it; and at night, above all—all sails shaking, eh?" cried Chourineur, bursting into a loud laugh. "There's not one tittle wanting—it is pretty knotty; my robbery has all the necessary condiments to make it spicy, as they say."

Germain was painfully moved by the hardened manner in which Chourineur spoke of his crimes, and could not avoid saying: "How can you, who are so generous and brave, speak in this manner? Do you not know to what a terrible punishment you have exposed yourself?"

"Twenty years in the galleys and the pillory. Am I not a great scoundrel to bear it so coolly? But what can I do? When we are once in it—and yet it is all for your sake, M. Germain," said Chourineur, heaving a deep sigh, with an affectation of contrition. "It is you who are the cause of my disgrace."

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Joke as much as you please. My gratitude for the services which you have rendered me, will not diminish," said Germain, sadly.

"Pardon me, M. Germain," replied Chourineur, in a serious tone. "You do not like to hear me talk in this manner. I will speak so no more. I must change my conversation, and I shall perhaps oblige you to hold out your hand."

"I have no doubt of it, for in spite of the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, everything about you bespeaks courage and frankness. I am sure that you are unjustly suspected. Circumstantial evidence perhaps endangers you?"

"As for that, you are much mistaken, M. Germain," said Chourineur, in such a sober voice, and with such an accent of sincerity, that Germain was compelled to believe him.

"Upon the honour of a man, and as true as that I have a protector ——" Chourineur removed his cap from his head in reverence—"who is to me what God is to the holy priest, I stole in the night, by breaking open a shutter. I was arrested in the act, having in my possession all that I had just stolen."

"But want, hunger, and misery, must have driven you to the commission of such a crime?"

"Hunger! I had a hundred and twenty francs when I was arrested; the remainder of a bill of a thousand francs, and besides, the protector of whom I speak, and who is ignorant that I am here, will never suffer me to want anything. But since I have spoken to you of my protector, you must think that I am growing serious; for he is a man that one would kneel down before. I tell you that the shower of fisticuffs that pattered upon the Skeleton is one of my protector's ways, which I copied from nature, and it was on his account that the idea of the theft came into my mind. And if you are here safe, instead of being strangled by Squelette, it is all owing to him."

"But who is this protector?"

"He is yours also."

"Mine!"

"Yes; M. Rodolph protects you. When I say Monsieur, I should say 'My lord,' for he is a prince at least; but I have been in the habit of calling him M. Rodolph, and he allows me to do it."

"You must be mistaken," said Germain, more and more surprised. "I am not acquainted with the prince."

"That may be, but he knows you, although you do not suspect it. It is very possible, for that is his way. He learns that an honest man is in trouble—bang! the honest man is relieved, unknown—unseen; for he keeps dark. Good showers down upon him from the clouds, like a tile upon one's head. So, be patient; one of these days your tile will come."

"In truth, what you tell me, perfectly confounds me."

"You will have many other things to learn. To return to my protector: after a service which he pretended I had rendered to him, he procured for me a superb situation! there is no need of my telling you what it was, for it would take too much time. In short, he sent me to Marseilles, to embark for Algeria, and get my superb situation. I started from Paris, happy as a lord. Good! but soon a change takes place. Suppose we say that I started by a fine sunshine; well, the next day the weather becomes cloudy; the day after, it becomes quite dark; and so on, more and more dark the farther I go, until it finally becomes as black as the devil. Do you understand?"

"Not exactly."

"Did you ever have a dog?"

"What a singular question!"

"Did you ever have a dog that loved you much, and finally got lost?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you simply, that when I was out of the sight of M. Rodolph, I was uneasy, stupid, and frightened, like a dog who has lost his master! It was silly, but the dogs also are silly; but that does not keep them from being attached, and remembering the good morsels, as well as the blows, which are given to them. And M. Rodolph had given me more than good morsels; for, look you! to me, M. Rodolph is worth more than all the world besides. He has made an honest man out of a wild, harum-scarum, good-for-nothing! Those two words which he uttered, are like magic."

* In Catholic countries, when any good luck happens to a man, he places a lighted candle before the image of his patron saint—large or small, according to the importance of the benefit received.

"'What did he say to you?'

"He told me that I had not lost my heart and my honour, although I had been to the bagnio; not for stealing, it is true—for, thank the Lord, I never did that—but for what is worse, perhaps, for having killed. Yes," said Chourineur, in a gloomy voice, "yes; killed in a moment of passion! Because, having been brought up like a brute, abandoned, without father or mother, on the pavement of Paris, I knew neither God nor the devil, good nor evil, strong nor weak. At times, blood would rush to my eyes—everything I saw was red; and if I had a knife in my hand, I stabbed and stabbed. I was like a perfect wolf; I saw no one but villains and bandits; and I didn't wear a crape on my hat for them either. I lived in the mud, and didn't know that I was in it; but when M. Rodolph told me, that in spite of the contempt of the world, and misery, I had preferred to work, instead of stealing like others, which showed that I had still a heart and honour—thunder! those two words had the same effect upon me, as if they had caught me by the hair and raised me a thousand feet in the air, above the vermin with whom I associated. I said at once: 'Thank you, I don't wish for any more;' and my heart beat, but not with anger. And I swore that I would always have that honour of which M. Rodolph spoke. You see, M. Germain, in what manner M. Rodolph, by assuring me that I was not as bad as I thought myself, encouraged me; and, thanks to him, I am better than I was."

Upon hearing this language, Germain was more completely amazed at the theft of which Chourineur accused himself.

"No," thought Germain, "it is impossible; the man who was so meliorated by the assurance that he had not lost his honour or his heart, cannot have committed the theft of which he speaks with so much indifference."

Chourineur continued, without noticing Germain's astonishment: "The reason, finally, which attaches me to M. Rodolph, like a dog to his master, is, that he has elevated me in my own eyes. Before I knew him, I never felt anything deeper than the skin; but he touched me inside. When I was separated from him, I felt like a body without a soul. As I went further, I said to myself: 'He passes such a singular life, and mingles with such great villains, as I know by experience, that he risks his skin twenty times in a day, and in one of those chances I might be his dog, and defend my master, for I have good teeth. But, on the other hand, he told me: 'Be useful to others, my boy; you must go where you can be of some service.' I had a great mind to reply to him: 'I can be useful to no one else but yourself, M. Rodolph;' but I dare not. He said to me, 'Go,' and I went, and I staid as long as I could. But, thunder! when I had to mount the ship, and put the sea between me and M. Rodolph, without the hope of ever seeing him again, I hadn't the courage to do it. He had written to his correspondent to give me as much money as I could carry, when I was ready to sail. I went to see the gentleman, and said to him: 'It is impossible for me to go to sea, I like the shore the best; give me enough to go on foot to Paris, for I have good legs, and wish to return. I can't stand it any longer. M. Rodolph may be angry, and refuse to see me, but I shall be in the same place with him; and, if he leads the same sort of life, sooner or later, I shall be able to place myself between a knife and him. I can't go away so far from him; something draws me to the place where he is.' He gave me enough to pay my journey, and I arrived in Paris. I am not a man to shrink before many things, but a fear seized me; how should I excuse myself to M. Rodolph, for returning without his permission? Pshaw! he won't eat me up; never mind the result. I will go and see his friend, a tall, large, bald man, a cream of a man, also. When M. Murphy came in, I said to myself: 'My fate will now be decided.' I felt my throat dry, and my heart beat. I expected a good lecture, but not so; the worthy man received me as if we had separated the day before, and told me that M. Rodolph, far from being angry, wished to see me immediately. He led me to my protector. Thunder! when I found myself face to face with him—he who has such a good countenance and kind heart; he who is terrible as a lion, and mild as a child; he who is a prince, and wore a blouse like mine, in order to have the chance, which I bless, of giving me a shower of fisticuffs, so that I saw nothing but fire—in thinking of all those qualities which he possessed, I felt all topsy-turvy, and I wept like a child. Instead of laughing at it—only imagine what a looking face mine is, when I weep—M. Rodolph said to me, soberly: 'You have, then, come back, my boy?' 'Yes, M. Rodolph; pardon me if I was wrong, but I couldn't stand it any longer. Have a kennel built for me, in the corner of your yard; give me my bread, or let me earn it here, is all that I ask of you; and don't be angry with me for having returned.' 'Far from being angry, my boy, I am rejoiced; for you come in time to render me a service.' 'I, M. Rodolph? can it be possible? there must be something above, as you say, or how could I explain my arrival on the very day you wished me? What can I do for you, M. Rodolph? Shall I take a dive from the top of the tower of Notre-Dame?' 'Less than that, my boy; an honest and excellent young man, in whom I take as much interest as if he were my son, is unjustly accused of theft, and confined in La Force; his name is Germain. He is of a mild and gentle disposition. The wretches with whom he is imprisoned, have an aversion to him, and he may be in great danger. You, who are, unfortunately, acquainted with prison life, and a great multitude of prisoners, could you not, in case that some of your old friends were in La Force — could you not see them, and by promising money, which shall be paid to them, engage them to protect that unhappy young man?'"

"But, who is this generous and unknown friend, that takes so much interest in me?" said Germain, with increasing surprise.

"You will, perhaps, know him; as for me, I must not tell. To return to my conversation with M. Rodolph: after he had spoken to me, I had such a funny idea, that I could not help laughing in his presence. 'What is the matter with you, my boy?' said he to me. 'Why, M. Rodolph, I laugh because I am happy, and have it in my power to put your M. Germain under a protection which will defend him from the ill-treatment of the prisoners, and to provide him with a friend that will protect him thoroughly; for if the young man is once under the wing of the chap to whom I allude, there will not be one who will dare look him in the face!' 'Very well, my boy; it is

probably one of your old companions!' 'Just so, M. Rodolph; he entered La Force a few days since. I heard of it on my arrival, but we must have some money!' 'How much is wanted?' 'A bill for a thousand francs!' 'Here it is!' 'Thank you, M. Rodolph; you shall hear from me within two days; your servant.' Thunder! the king was not my master. It was in my power to render service to M. Rodolph on your account: that was famous!"

"I begin to understand, or rather, I tremble to understand," said Germain. "Is such devotion possible? You have, perhaps, committed a robbery, to defend me here;—'twould be the sorrow of my life, if such was the fact!"

"Wait a moment! M. Rodolph had said to me: 'You have a heart and honour!' These were the words, you see, which are my law; and he can tell me so again, for if I am no better than I was before, at least, I am no worse."

"But the robbery! the robbery! if you did not commit it, how do you happen to be here?"

"Hear me, and listen to a farce. With my thousand francs, I purchased a black periwig; I shaved off my whiskers, I put on blue spectacles, I stuffed a pillow in my back, to make a hump for myself, and I began to look for a room upon the lower floor, in a retired street. I found the place which I wanted, in the Rue de Provence, and I paid in advance, under the name of M. Gregory. The next day, I went to the Temple to buy furniture for the two rooms, always having on my black periwig, my hump, and my blue spectacles, so that I should be well known; I sent my effects to the Rue de Provence, and six silver spoons and forks, which I bought on the Boulevard Saint-Denis, all the time disguised with the hump. I returned to put everything in order in my domicile; I told the porter that I should not lodge there for two days, and I carried away my key. The windows of the two rooms were fastened by strong shutters, and before I went away, I unfastened one upon the inside. When the night came on, I took off my periwig, my spectacles, and the hump, in which I had made my purchases, and hired my rooms. I put this disguise in a trunk, which I sent to the address of M. Murphy, the friend of M. Rodolph, intreating him to take care of the traps; I bought the blouse and blue cap, and a crowbar, two feet long, and at one o'clock in the morning, I went to hang about my lodgings in the Rue de Provence, waiting until the moment the patrol should pass, to commence my robbery and burglary, in order to be arrested:" and Chourineur could not restrain a hearty laugh.

"I understand," exclaimed Germain.

"You will see if I was not in bad luck. No patrol passed: I might have robbed myself twenty times, with perfect ease. Finally, at about two o'clock in the morning, I heard footsteps; the guard was approaching. I opened the shutter, broke the window, so as to make a devil of a noise, jumped into the room, caught hold of the box of spoons and forks, and a few clothes. The patrol fortunately heard the rattle of the glass; for just as I was coming out of the window, I was seized by the guards, who had hastened their steps on hearing the noise of the broken glass. They rapped at the door; the porter opened it, and they went after the commissary. When he arrived, the porter told him, that the two rooms which were robbed had been hired the day before by a hunchback gentleman, with black hair, and wearing blue glasses, and whose name was Gregory. I had this tow hair which you see on me; I kept my eye open, like a rabbit in his burrow; I was as erect as a Russian presenting arms, therefore, I could not be mistaken for the hunchback with blue glasses and black hair. I confessed everything, and was arrested and taken to the depôt, and from there here; and I arrived just in time to pull from the claws of Squelette, the young man respecting whom M. Rodolph had said: 'I am as much interested as if he were my own son.'"

"How much I am indebted for your devoted kindness!" exclaimed Germain.

"It is not to me, but to M. Rodolph, that you owe your deliverance."

"But what is the reason of his interest in me?"

"Perhaps he will inform you, perhaps not; for he often contents himself with doing good, and if you have the boldness to ask him the reason, he will not hesitate to reply: 'Mind your own business.'"

"Does M. Rodolph know that you are here?"

"I was not such a fool as to tell him my plan, for he probably would not have allowed me to play the joke; and, without bragging, I think that it is a famous one."

"But how many risks you ran!"

"What did I risk? I might have been taken to some other prison, to be sure; but I relied on the influence of M. Rodolph, to get my prison changed, and join you. A lord, like himself, can do anything; once caught, he would have been willing that I should be of use to you."

"But when your trial comes on?"

"I will ask M. Murphy to send me the trunk. I will put on before the judge, my black periwig, blue glasses, and hump. I return again to M. Gregory, for the benefit of the porter who hired the room to me, and for the tradesmen who sold the articles to me;—so much for the robbed man. If they wish to see the thief again, I will change my clothes, and it will be plain as daylight, that the robber and the robbed man compose the sum total of Chourineur, no more nor less. What the devil will they do to me, when 'tis proved that I robbed myself?"

"Truly," said Germain, relieved, "you are right. But since you have felt such interest for me, why did you not address me when you entered the prison?"

"I discovered the plot which they formed against you. I might have denounced it before Pique Vinaigre commenced or finished his story, but to betray such bandits as those, didn't suit me. I preferred to trust to my own fists to rescue you from Squelette's claws; and when I first saw him, I said to myself: 'Here is a first-rate chance to practise M. Rodolph's style of fisticuffs, which first introduced me to his acquaintance.'"

"If all the prisoners had combined against you, what could you have done?"

"I should have then screamed for help, like an eagle; but it suited me better to do my own cooking, so as to be able to tell M. Rodolph: 'I was the only one who meddled with the affair.' I have defended, and will defend you, young man, depend upon it."

At this moment, the guard suddenly entered the room. "M. Germain, come to see the director as soon as possible. He wishes to speak with you immediately; and you, Chourineur,

my brave fellow, go down to the Lion's Den. You shall be made provost, if it suits you, for you have all the qualities which are necessary to fulfil those functions, and the prisoners won't jest with a man of your build."

"It suits me very well. One might be captain or soldier while he is here."

"Do you still refuse my hand?" said Germain to Chourineur, cordially.

"Oh, no, M. Germain! No. I think that I can allow myself that pleasure, and I shake your hand with a good heart."

"We will meet again, for I am here under your protection, and I shall have nothing more to fear, and I will come down every day into the yard."

"You may rest assured, that if I wish it, no one shall speak to you here, unless he is on all fours. But now that I think of it, you know how to write; put on paper what I have just told you, and send the story to M. Rodolph; he will then know that he has no reason to be anxious on your account, and that I am here with a good motive; for should he learn from any other source that Chourineur has stolen, and shouldn't hear the other side of the story, thunder! it wouldn't suit me."

"Be quiet: I will write this very evening to my unknown protector; to-morrow, you shall give me his direction, and the letter shall start. Farewell, once more! thank you, my brave fellow!"

"Farewell! I must return to the swarm of villains over whom I am provost; and they will have to walk straight, or else stand from under."

"When I think that on my account, you have yet some time to dwell among these wretches ——"

"What do I care? There is no danger of their falling upon me. M. Rodolph has sprinkled me so well, that I am insured against fire;" and Chourineur followed the guard. Germain entered the director's room. What was his surprise! he found Rigolette there! The grisette was pale, agitated, with her eyes filled with tears, yet smiling through them, her countenance indicating indescribable joy and happiness.

"I have good news to give you, sir," said the director to Germain. "The authorities have declared, that the accusation against you is withdrawn; particularly owing to some explanations which have been given, and I have received orders to release you, immediately."

"Sir, what do you say? is it possible?"

Rigolette wished to speak, but was prevented by the strength of her own emotions; and she could only make an affirmative sign, and clasp her hands.

"Mademoiselle arrived here a few moments after I received the order for your release," added the director. "A letter of powerful recommendation which she brought me, has informed me of her touching devotion during your residence in prison. It is then with great pleasure, that I have sent for you, confident that you will be rejoiced to give your arm to mademoiselle, and leave this place."

"A dream! it must be a dream!" said Germain. "What goodness! Pardon me, if surprise and joy prevent me from expressing my gratitude as I should do."

"Neither can I, M. Germain, find a word to say," said Rigolette. "Judge of my happiness! when I left you, I met the friend of M. Rodolph, who was waiting for me."

"M. Rodolph again!" said Germain, astonished.

"Yes; now I can tell you everything, M. Murphy said to me. 'Germain is free; here is a letter for the director of the prison; before you arrive there, he will have received the order to release him, and you may conduct him from the prison.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. I hastily entered a cab; I arrived here, and it is now below, waiting for us."

We renounce the attempt to describe the delight of the two lovers, in leaving La Force—the evening of unalloyed happiness which they passed in the little room of Rigolette, which Germain left at eleven o'clock, for the humble lodgings provided for him.

* * *

Let us sum up, in a few words, the facts and theories which we have endeavoured to place in this episode of prison life. We shall esteem ourselves most happy, if we have been able to demonstrate—

The insufficiency, and the powerless nature of imprisonment in common:

The disproportion between the magnitude and the punishment of certain crimes—domestic theft and burglary; and certain offences—the breach of trust:

And finally, the actual impossibility of the poorer classes enjoying the benefits of the law.

CHAPTER VII.

PUNISHMENT.

We must again conduct the reader to the office of Jacques Ferrand, the notary. Thanks to the habitual loquacity of the clerks, almost incessantly occupied with the increasing eccentricity of their employer, we shall be able to expose the events which had taken place since the disappearance of Cecily.

"A hundred sous against ten, if the governor continues to grow thin for a month more, he will burst like a musket."

"The fact is, that since the servant who looked like an Alsatian, departed, there is nothing left of him but skin and bones."

"And what skin!"

"I think he must have been in love with the Alsatian, since he has grown so lank since her departure."

"The governor in love! what a joke!"

"On the contrary, he receives priests more than ever."

"And, besides, the curate of the pariah, a very upright man, as he went away yesterday, said to another priest, who was with him: 'It is excellent! M. Jacques Ferrand is the ideal of charity and generosity upon earth!'"

"The curate said that by himself, and without effort?"

"What?"

"Did he say the patron was the ideal of charity and generosity upon earth?"

"Yes; I heard him, myself."

"I must confess, that I don't understand anything about it; the curate has the reputation—and he deserves it—of being what is called a first-rate pastor."

"That is true; and we should speak of the priest seriously, and with respect; he is as good and charitable as the 'Little Blue Mantle;'* and,

* We must be allowed to mention here, with veneration, the name of that excellent man, M. Champion; with whom we have not the honour of a personal acquaintance, but of whom all the poor of Paris speak with as much respect as gratitude.

when this compliment can be paid to a man, his character is established."

"That is no small praise."

"No; for the 'Little Blue Mantle' and the good priest, the people have but one cry—the cry of the heart."

"Then I must assert again, when the curate affirms this, he must be believed; for he is incapable of falsehood—and yet, to believe that the governor is charitable and generous! it sticks in the corner of my faith!"

"That's pretty! sweet and pretty, Chalomel!"

"I would as soon believe in a miracle, as in the governor's generosity—one is as incredible as the other."

"M. Ferrand generous! the man who would skin a flint!"

"However, gentlemen, consider the forty sous for our breakfast!"

"Fine proof, that! it is just like a pimple upon the nose—an accident."

"Yes, but on the other hand, the clerk told me that the governor had received an enormous sum in treasury bills, and that ——"

"Well, go on."

"Speak!"

"It's a secret."

"That's another reason for telling us."

"Well, give me your word of honour that you won't mention it."

"We give our word, by all that is dearest in the world! may my aunt Messidor make a fool of herself, if I speak!"

"And besides, gentlemen, we must remember what Louis XIV. majestically said to the Doge of Venice:—

"'When clerks a secret hear,
They always blab—that's clear.'"

"Here is Chalomel again, with his eternal poetry and proverbs."

"I demand the head of Chalomel."

"Proverbs are the wisdom of nations—on that account, I ask for your secret."

"Come, no fooling; I tell you that the head clerk made me promise to disclose it to no one."

"That may be; but he did not forbid you to tell it to everybody."

"In short, the secret won't be drawn from my heart; depend upon that."

"He is dying with desire to tell us his secret."

"Well, the governor intends to sell his business; and perhaps at this very hour 'tis done."

"You don't say so!"

"That's queer news!"

"It is perfectly astonishing!"

"It is dazzling!"

"Without charge! who charged himself with the charge which he discharged!"

"That Chalomel will be the death of me, with his quiddities."

"And to whom does he intend to sell it?"

"If he sells it, I presume that he intends to launch out, and give feasts and parties, like fashionable people."

"After all, he is pretty well off."

"And he has not the incumbrance of a family."

"I should think that he is pretty well off, for the head clerk spoke of more than one million, including the value of the commission."

"More than a million!"

"They say that he has speculated in stocks, in an underhand manner, with Commandant Robert; and that he has made much money."

"Besides, he lives like a beggar."

"Yes, but these stingy fellows, when they once begin to spend their money, they become more prodigal than any other people."

"I am of Chalomel's mind; I rather think the governor wishes to lead an easy life."

"And he would be a cursed fool if he didn't sink into luxury, and plunge himself into the delights of Golconda, if he has the means; for the inflated Ossian sings in the Grotto of Fingal:—

"'Any notary that turns out bright,
If he has a *quibus*, is in the right.'"

"I demand the head of Chalomel."

"'Tis absurd."

"The governor doesn't look much as if he was thinking of amusing himself."

"He looks as if he was attending the devil's funeral."

"And the curate praises his charity!"

"Well, *charity begins at home*."

"You don't even know the Commandments, irreligious dog! If the governor asks alms of himself for the greatest pleasures, it is his duty to grant himself the gratification; otherwise, he would hold himself in little esteem."

"What astonishes me is, that intimate friend, who has fallen from the clouds, and sticks to him like his shadow."

"Add to that, he has a bad face."

"His hair is red as a beet."

"I am rather inclined to think, that this intruder is the result of some *faux pas* of M. Ferrand in early youth."

"I demand again the head of Chalomel!"

"That's right; it is impossible to talk rationally a moment with him."

"What nonsense, to call the unknown the governor's son! he is older than the notary."

"What of that?"

"How! can the son be older than the father?"

"It is a very extreme case."

"How do you explain it?"

"In that case, the intruder must have committed the *faux pas*, and be the father of M. Ferrand, instead of his son."

"I demand the head of Chalomel!"

"Take no notice of him; there is no end to his nonsense, when he once commences."

"What is certain, is, that the intruder has a bad face; and he sticks to M. Ferrand like a leech."

"He is constantly with him in his study, and one cannot stir without the other."

"It seems to me, that I have seen that intruder in this house before."

"I have not."

"I say, gentlemen, have you not observed, that, within a few days, a man, with light moustache and a military air, comes regularly, about once in two hours, and sends the porter after the intruder, who comes down, talks a moment with the man of the moustache, after which he turns round like an automaton, and returns again in two hours."

"That is true, I have observed it. It seems to me, also, that I meet when going home, some men who watch the house."

"I think, seriously, that something extraordinary is going on here."

"He who lives will see."

"Upon this subject, the head clerk knows more than we do; but he plays the *diplomate*."

"By the way, where has the head clerk gone?"

"He has gone to see that countess who was

stabbed. It seems now, that she is out of danger."

"The Countess Macgregor?"

"Yes. This morning, she sent for the governor, but he despatched the head clerk in his stead."

"It is, perhaps, to draw up her will."

"No, she is getting better."

"Hasn't the head clerk his hands full, since he has taken Germain's place as cashier?"

"Speaking of Germain—that is another queer affair."

"What is that?"

"The governor, in order to set Germain at liberty, has declared that it was he, M. Ferrand, who had made an error in his accounts, and that he has found the money which he claimed of Germain."

"I don't call that queer, but just. You remember, that I always said, that Germain was not a man who could steal."

"It was very annoying, anyhow, to be arrested and imprisoned as a thief."

"I would demand reparation of M. Ferrand, if I was in his place."

"He ought to have restored him to his situation, to satisfy every one that Germain was not guilty."

"Yes, but perhaps Germain didn't want the place again."

"Is he still on the farm, to which he went after he left the prison, and whence he wrote to inform us that M. Ferrand had withdrawn the accusation?"

"Probably; for I went yesterday to the house he mentioned, and I was told there, that he was still in the country, and we could write to him at Bouqueval, by the way of Ecouen, directed to the farm of Madame Georges."

"Hallo, gentlemen! a carriage!" said Chalomel, bending over towards the window; "but it is not a splendid equipage, like that of the famous viscount. Do you remember that dashing Saint-Remy, with his footman covered with silver lace, and his large coachman in a white periwig?"

"It is a plain hackney-coach which is before the door now."

"And who alights?"

"Stop a bit: a black dress."

"A woman! a woman! let us see her."

"That Leap-gutters is indecently sensual, for his age; he thinks of nothing but women: we shall be obliged to chain him up; for, as the Swan of Cambray has it, in his 'Treatise on Education, for the use of the Dauphine:'

"'Distrust Leap-gutters' when on the sex
They make assault, and strive to vex.'"

"I demand the head of Chalomel!"

"Why, M. Chalomel, you said a black dress, and I thought ——"

"It is the curate of the parish, fool! let that serve you as a lesson."

"The curate of the parish? the good pastor?"

"It is himself, gentlemen."

"He is a worthy man."

"He is no Jesuit, I assure you."

"I know it; and if all priests were like him, everybody would be pious."

"Silence! some one is coming in."

"Hush! hush! it is he."

And all the clerks, bending over the desk, drove their pens with commendable industry. The pale countenance of the priest was, at the same time, mild and grave, intelligent and venerable; his expression was meditative and serene; a small black cowl was upon his head, and his long grey hair fell down upon the collar of his cloak. We must add that, owing to the simplicity and artlessness of his disposition, this excellent priest had always been a dupe to the cunning and hypocrisy of Jacques Ferrand.

"Is your worthy employer in his study, my children?" asked the curate.

"Yes, sir," said Chalomel, rising respectfully; and he opened for the priest the door of the room adjoining the study.

Hearing some one speaking in a passionate tone, in the notary's study, the curate walked rapidly towards the door, and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice, with a marked Italian accent.

The priest entered, and found himself face to face with Polidori and Jacques Ferrand. The clerks of the notary had good reason for predicting the demise of their employer. Since the flight of Cecily, his most intimate acquaintance could hardly recognise the notary. Although his face was perfectly cadaverous, almost lividly pale, a hectic flush was plainly delineated upon his prominent cheek-bones; a nervous twitching and convulsive starts, constantly jerked his frame; his lean hands were parched and feverish; his large green glasses concealed his bloodshot eyes, radiant with a wild and unnatural lustre of disease. In one word, the repulsive countenance betrayed that he was the victim of a rapid and incurable consumption.

The physiognomy of Polidori was in strange contrast with the notary. No expression could be more sarcastic, no smile more sneering and bitter, than those of the confederate scoundrel. His pale and wrinkled forehead was surmounted by a large growth of bright red hair, in which a few grey locks were mingled; his eyes, sharp, keen, and sea-green, were close to his hooked nose; his thin and compressed lips clearly conveyed the irony and malice of his nature. Dressed in a suit of black, he was seated near the writing-desk of the notary.

When the priest entered, both arose.

"How is your health, to-day, my worthy M. Ferrand?" said the abbé, with solicitude; "do you find yourself any better?"

"My health does not improve, my venerable friend; the fever does not leave me," replied the notary: "want of sleep has ruined my health; but let the will of God be done."

"You observe, my good abbé," said Polidori, in a sanctimonious manner, "with what Christian resignation our exemplary friend is gifted. His health does not seem to improve; he finds no relief from his pain, except in acts of benevolence and charity."

"I do not deserve such praises; I beg of you to dispense with them," said the notary, drily, concealing with difficulty his rage and restrained vengeful feelings, at the biting sneers of his companion. "The Lord alone is the judge of what is good and what is evil. I am but a miserable sinner."

"We are all sinners," replied the abbé, mildly; "but we have not all the unprecedented charity which distinguishes you, my respected friend. There are but a few mortals who have the self-denial to relinquish the goods of this world, and devote their property to such pious uses. Do you still persist in selling your business, in order to devote yourself more exclusively to the duties of religion?"

"I sold my commission the day before yester-

day; and by a few concessions, I have been able to receive the price in cash. This sum, added to others I possess, will serve to found the institution of which I spoke to you. The plan of it I have now completed in all its details, and intend to submit it to you."

"Ah! my worthy friend," said the priest, with a profound and holy admiration, "to do so much good, in such an unostentatious and natural manner, is, I repeat, an unexampled instance of humble philanthropy. There are not praises enough to bestow on you."

"But few individuals, like my worthy friend Jacques, unite wealth and piety, intelligence and charity," said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which the priest did not perceive.

The notary involuntarily clenched his fists at this repetition of sneering eulogy. He cast from under his glasses a look of infernal hatred upon Polidori.

"You see, sir," said the beloved companion of the notary, "he is incessantly subject to these nervous attacks, and yet he will apply no remedy to them. He grieves and afflicts me. My poor friend is his own destroyer."

The notary started again convulsively, at this renewed attack, but restrained his feelings.

A man less artless than the abbé, would have noticed in the preceding conversation, and in that which is to follow, that Jacques Ferrand was constantly struggling to conceal outbreaks of hatred and rage; for it is unnecessary to state, that a will superior to his own—the will of Rodolph—dictated to this man words and actions which were diametrically opposed to his real disposition. At times, driven to desperation, the wretch, whom vengeance had at length reached, struggled with the invisible and mighty authority which was awarding to him his deserts; but one glance of Polidori calmed his resistance, and put an end to his indecision. With concentrated rage, which he was obliged to smother with all the powers he could summon, the culprit was compelled to bend his neck to the yoke which he could not break.

"Alas! sir," said Polidori, who seemed to make it a part of his duty to goad his accomplice to the very limits of endurance, "alas! sir, I cannot prevail upon my poor friend to pay the least attention to his health. I beseech you, my good abbé, to unite your entreaties to mine, that we may persuade him to be more careful of his valuable life; if not for his own sake, for that of his friends, who are bound to him by so many ties—for the sake of the unfortunate, whose support and succour he is."

"Enough! enough!" muttered the notary, in a hollow voice.

"No, it is not enough," said the priest, with emotion. "You cannot be too frequently told that you are not your own, and that it is wrong for you to neglect your health in this manner. I have now been acquainted with you for ten years, and never saw you sick before; but for a fortnight past, a singular change has come over you. I was the more struck with the alteration of your features, as there was an interval when I did not see you, and when I met you again, I could not conceal my surprise: but the change which I have observed in you within a few days is much greater; you are rapidly growing worse and worse, and cause us great anxiety. I beseech you, my worthy friend, to take more care of your health."

"I am very grateful to you, my excellent friend, for your interest," said the notary; "but I assure you, that my situation is not as alarming as you suppose."

"Since you are so obstinate," replied Polidori, "I will inform the abbé of everything: he loves, esteems, and honours you highly; what will then his admiration be when he hears of your new meritorious acts? when he learns the true cause of your declining health?"

"What new wonder have you to disclose?" said the abbé.

"My dear sir," said the notary, with impatience, "I sent for you in order to communicate to you some projects of great importance, and not to have my friend ridiculously proclaim my praise."

"You know, Jacques, that you must submit to hear everything I choose to say," said Polidori, looking steadfastly at the notary. Jacques Ferrand hung down his head, and was silent. Polidori continued, addressing the abbé: "You have perhaps observed, sir, that the first indication of the nervous disorder of my friend occurred very shortly after the abominable scandal which Louise Morel caused in this house."

The notary shuddered.

"You are then acquainted, sir, with the crime of that unfortunate girl," said the priest, with an air of astonishment. "I thought that you had been in Paris but a few days."

"True, sir; but Jacques has revealed everything to me as his friend and physician—for he attributes almost entirely to his indignation against the crime of Louise, the nervous attacks to which he is subject now. But this is not all; my poor friend was destined to new misfortunes, which, as you see, have undermined his constitution. An old servant, who had been for many years attached to him by the ties of gratitude——"

"Madame Seraphin," said the curate, interrupting Polidori: "I heard of the death of that unfortunate woman, drowned by means of a lamentable accident; and I can readily conceive of M. Ferrand's grief. Ten years of faithful services cannot be easily forgotten. Such regrets are as honourable to the master as they are to the servant."

"I entreat you, my dear friend, not to mention my virtues! You distress me; I am pained by it."

"And who shall speak of them, then? Will it be yourself?" replied Polidori, affectionately. "You will be compelled to praise him more," continued he, addressing the curate. "You are perhaps ignorant who the servant actually was, that succeeded Louise Morel and Madame Seraphin. In short, you do not know what he has done for that poor Cecily—for such was her name."

The notary, in spite of himself, started on his seat; his eyes glistened behind his glasses; a burning flush diffused itself over his pallid face. "Silence! silence!" he exclaimed, partly rising from his seat; "not one word more! I forbid you!"

"Come, come, be calm," said the abbé, smiling with kindness; "I am sure there is some new generous action to be revealed, and I approve of the indiscretion of your friend. I was unacquainted with the servant, for shortly after her arrival at the house of our worthy friend, his numerous engagements compelled him to interrupt our intercourse for a season."

"It was to hide from you the benevolent act which he designed; and although I may wound

his modesty, he must listen to me while I reveal to you all," said Polidori, smiling.

Jacques Ferrand was silent; he leaned upon his desk with his elbow, and concealed his face in his hands.

"You must know then, sir," continued Polidori, addressing the curate, accompanying each word with an ironical glance at Jacques Ferrand, "you must know that my friend found in his new servant, who, as I said before, was called Cecily, the most extraordinary qualities—great modesty, angelic sweetness, and, above all, sincere piety. That is not all. Jacques, as you know, is indebted to his long habits of business for an extreme penetration, and he soon discovered that the young female—for she was young and beautiful—that this young and lovely woman was not created for a servant, and that to principles of austere virtue she joined a superior education and varied acquirements."

"This is, indeed, surprising," said the curate, deeply interested; "I was entirely ignorant of these circumstances. But what ails you, my excellent M. Ferrand?—you seem to be in great suffering!"

"I am!" said the notary, wiping the cold perspiration from his brow, so great was the restraint necessary to conceal his wrath; "my head aches slightly, but I shall soon recover."

Polidori smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and continued: "You must observe, sir, that such is the invariable state of M. Ferrand, when some of his secret acts of charity are revealed, so unostentatious is he in his benevolence; but I am fortunately with him, and shall render him strict justice. Let us return to Cecily: she soon divined the excellence of Jacques's heart, and when he questioned her respecting her past life, she artlessly confessed that, being a stranger, without resources, and reduced, in consequence of the ill conduct of her husband, to such a humble condition, she regarded it as a special interposition of Providence, that she had obtained a situation in the house of a man so devout as M. Ferrand. Jacques, observing that she was gifted with so much mind, virtue, resignation, and piety, did not hesitate; he wrote to some persons in the native place of the unfortunate woman, to collect some information respecting her. They confirmed the statements which had been made to our friend, and M. Ferrand, convinced that his kindness was bestowed upon a worthy object, blessed Cecily as a father, sent her back to her own country, with a sum of money which would enable her to wait for better days, and give her the opportunity of finding a more suitable situation. I shall not add any praise—the facts are more eloquent than my words."

"Excellent, excellent!" exclaimed the curate, with emotion.

"My dear friend," said Jacques Ferrand, in a short, hollow tone of voice, "I do not wish to abuse your precious moments; speak no more of me, I pray you, but of the projects respecting which I asked your presence, and for which I shall invoke your kind assistance."

"I can see that the praises of your friend wound your modesty; let us employ ourselves about your new plan of benevolence, and strive to forget that you are its author; but before that, let us speak to the business you have already entrusted to my care. I have, according to your desire, deposited in the Bank of France, in my own name, the sum of three hundred thousand francs, designed as a restitution by some person of whom you are the agent, and which is to be placed in the hands of the individuals to whom it belongs, by me. It was your desire that this deposit should not remain with you, although it would have been as safe in your charge as in the bank."

"In this respect, I obeyed the instructions of the unknown author of this restitution: he acts in this manner for the repose of his conscience. It was his desire that I should confide this sum to you, and ask you to pay it over to Madame de Fermont, a widow, whose family name was Renneville"—the voice of the notary trembled slightly, while pronouncing these names—"when that lady presents herself before you, and establishes her claim."

"I shall fulfil the duty with which you have entrusted me," said the priest.

"It is not the last one."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this; for without wishing to inquire into the motives which prompt it, I am always touched with a voluntary restitution. These sovereign decrees which conscience alone imposes, and which are executed faithfully to the internal monitor, are always a sign of sincere repentance, and an expiation of such a nature is never fruitless."

"It is true, sir, three hundred thousand francs restored at once, is a rare illustration of the power of conscience, but I have been more inquisitive than you, yet what has my curiosity availed against the immoveable discretion of Jacques; so that I am still ignorant of the name of the honest man who makes this noble restitution."

"Whoever he may be," said the priest, "I am confident that he holds a high place in the esteem of M. Ferrand."

"Indeed, that honest man is highly esteemed by me," replied the notary, with a bitterness which was ill dissembled.

"And this is not all, sir," replied Polidori, looking at Jacques Ferrand in a significant manner. "You will see how far this unknown restorer carries his generous scruples; and if I must tell everything, I very much suspect that our friend has contributed to awaken these scruples, and to find the means to calm them."

"How so?" asked the priest.

"What do you mean?" added the notary.

"And the Morels—that good and honest family?"

"Oh! yes, yes! I forgot," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice.

"Imagine, sir, that the author of this restitution, probably under the advice of Jacques, not satisfied with restoring this large amount, wishes yet——but I will leave this worthy friend of ours to speak. I will not deprive him of that pleasure."

"I listen to you, my dear M. Ferrand," said the priest.

"You know," continued Jacques Ferrand, in a sanctimonious manner, mingled with occasional emotions of revolt against the task imposed upon him—movements which were indicated by the change of his voice, and the hesitation of his manner; "you know, sir, that the misconduct of Louise Morel afflicted her father so terribly, that he has become deranged. The large family of the artisan ran the risk of perishing from misery, being deprived of their only support.

Providence has come to their aid, and—the—person who makes the voluntary restitution of which you have consented to be the intermediary, did not think that he—had sufficiently expiated a—a—great abuse of confidence, and therefore asked of me, if I knew of any interesting and unfortunate family to relieve! I pointed out to his generosity, the family of Morel; and I was requested, after receiving the necessary funds, which I will give to you presently, to commit to you the office of procuring a life annuity for Morel, reverting to his wife and children."

"While I accept this important trust, I am astonished that you yourself were not charged with it."

"The unknown person supposed, and I agree with him, that his good works would acquire a new value—would be, as I may say, sanctified, by passing through such pious hands as yours."

"I have no reply to make; I will settle an annuity of two thousand francs on the life of Morel, the worthy and unhappy father of Louise; but I believe, like your friend, that you are no stranger to this new expiatory gift."

"I pointed out the Morel family, nothing more; I pray you to believe so."

"Now," said Polidori, "you will see to what height of philanthropic views my good Jacques has reached concerning the charitable establishment of which we conversed. He will read to you the plan which he has arranged in all its details—the necessary sum for establishing the institution is there in his vault; but since yesterday, a scruple entered his mind, and if he dare not disclose it, I will.

"It is unnecessary," said Jacques Ferrand, who occasionally preferred to speak himself, than to be forced to endure in silence the praise of his accomplice. "This is the fact, sir; I have reflected that it would be more humble, more Christian-like, that this establishment should not be founded in my own name."

"Your humility seems to me to be exaggerated," exclaimed the priest; "you can, nay, you ought to be legitimately proud of your charitable foundation; it is your right, almost your duty, to attach your name to it."

"I prefer, however, to preserve the incognito. I am decided upon the subject; and I rely sufficiently upon your kindness, to hope that you will condescend to preserve profound secrecy in all the formalities; and to select, yourself, all the inferior officers of the establishment: I have only reserved to myself the nomination of the director and the porter."

"Even though I took no pleasure in assisting you in this good work of yours, it would be my duty to accept; and I therefore do accept."

"Now, if you are willing," said Polidori, "my friend will read to you the plan, which he has definitely arranged."

"Since you are so kind," said Jacques Ferrand, with bitterness, "read it yourself; spare me the trouble, I pray you."

"No, no," replied Polidori, casting upon the notary a look, the sarcastic signification of which he fully appreciated; "I anticipate great pleasure in hearing you read, yourself, the noble sentiments which have induced you to establish this philanthropic institution."

"Very well, I will read," said the notary, roughly taking a paper from his desk.

Polidori, for a long time the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, was perfectly acquainted with the crimes, and even the secret thoughts of that wretch, and he could not restrain a cruel smile, at seeing him forced to read the following note, dictated by Rodolph. As will be seen, the prince had adopted an inexorable system in the punishment of the notary: lustful, he tortured him through his lust—miserly, he reached him through his avarice—hypocritical, through his hypocrisy; for Rodolph had selected the venerable priest as an agent of the restitution and expiation enforced upon Ferrand, for the reason that he might doubly punish the wretch, for having, by his detestable hypocrisy, won the artless esteem and frank disposition of the good curate. Was it not, indeed, a severe punishment, for this arch impostor, for this hardened criminal, to practise, actually, the Christian virtues which he had so often affected, and to justify, while shuddering with rage, the eulogies of a devout abbé, who had been, thus far, his dupe?

Jacques Ferrand read this note with the restrained agony which we leave the reader to imagine:—

"'A BANK FOR THE RELIEF OF UNEMPLOYED LABOURERS.

"'*Love one another*, said our Saviour. These divine words contain the germ of all duty, all virtue, and all charity.

"'They have inspired the humble founder of this institution. To our Saviour alone belongs the good which it may do. Although the founder is limited in the means of action, he desires that as large a number as possible of his brethren of the human family, should participate in the aid which he offers them.

"'He addresses, in the first place, honest and laborious workmen, with a family, who, for want of employment, are often reduced to the severest extremities.

"'It is not humiliating alms that he offers to his brothers, but gratuitous loans. May they be a frequent preventive from burdening their future lives, by those impoverishing loans that they are often compelled to receive, while waiting for employment—their only resource in sustaining a family they are compelled to support.

"'For security of such loans, he asks only of his brother a promise, based solely upon his honour. He realises an annual revenue of twelve thousand francs, without interest, to unemployed married workmen, dwelling in the seventh district. This district is chosen, from its being one of those in which the working-classes are the most numerous.

"'These loans will be granted only to such of the working-classes of both sexes, as can present a certificate of good conduct obtained from their last employer, and in which the cause and the date of the suspension of work will be indicated.

"'These loans will be reimbursable monthly, in the proportion of one-sixth or one-twelfth, at the option of the borrower, *commencing on the day when employment shall be obtained*. He will merely sign an *agreement of honour* to return the loan at the time appointed, in which two of his companions will join as security, for the purpose of giving force, solidity, and solemnity to the sworn promise.* Neither the workman who fails to return the sum borrowed by him, nor

* It may not be known, perhaps, that the working-classes generally adhere so tenaciously to a promise thus given, that the vampires who lend to them for a short week, at the enormous tax of three hundred to four hundred per

those who become his security, will be able to obtain a new loan; for he will have forfeited a sacred engagement, and, furthermore, deprived many of his brother-workmen of the advantage which he has enjoyed, as the sum, not being returned, becomes lost to the bank for the poor. If these loans, on the contrary, are scrupulously returned, the revenue will increase from year to year in amount; and at a future day, other districts will be able to participate in the same benefits. Men should not be degraded by alms, nor idleness encouraged by fruitless charity. In order to stimulate sentiments of honour and probity, natural to the working-classes—in order to approach with fraternal aid the labourer who finds it difficult to live from day to day, owing to the insufficiency of his wages, and who cannot suspend his own wants and those of his family, because labour is suspended—such are the motives* which have dictated the establishment of this bank for the benefit of the unemployed poor. Let His name be glorified by it, who has said, *Love one another.*'"

"Oh! sir," exclaimed the abbé, with a religious admiration, "what a charitable idea! now I appreciate your emotions, while reading those lines of such touching simplicity."

The voice of Jacques Ferrand, in finishing the memorandum, was really much affected. His patience and courage were completely exhausted; but attentively watched by Polidori, he was unable to contravene the slightest orders of Rodolph. Let the reader imagine the notary's rage, at being forced to dispose of his fortune so charitably, in favour of a class whom he had mercilessly persecuted in the person of Morel, the lapidary.

"Do you not think, sir, that the idea of our generous friend is excellent?" said Polidori.

"Ah, sir! I, who am intimately acquainted with all kinds of misery, can, better than any one else, appreciate the importance of this loan, to poor and honest labourers without employment, which would seem so insignificant to the fortunate. Alas! how much good the rich might dispense, if they knew that, with a sum too small to gratify their caprices — that, with thirty or forty francs, which would be restored scrupulously, but without interest, they might frequently secure the future well-being, and sometimes save the honour of a family, which, from want of employment, is exposed to the frightful temptations which are the result of misery and poverty. Indigence, without labour, never finds any credit; and, if small sums are loaned to them, without security, it is often with a usurious interest. Thirty sous are borrowed for a week, and forty must be returned; and yet these small loans are rare and difficult. The loans of the Mont-de-Piété† cost, in certain circumstances, three hundred per cent. The artisan without labour, often deposits for forty sous, the only blanket which, in the winter nights, protects him and his family from the severity of the cold. But," continued the abbé, with enthusiasm, "a loan of thirty or forty francs, without interest, and payable in twelfths, when work returns, will be the hope, life, and salvation, of honest workmen. With what punctuality they will pay their debt! it is not in that class that there will be failures. The debt is sacred, which they contract to give bread to their wives and children."

"How grateful to you, Jacques, must be the praises of the curate!" said Polidori; "and how many more he will bestow upon you, when he shall learn your intention to establish a gratuitous Mont-de-Piété!"

"What do you say?"

"Certainly, sir; Jacques has not forgotten that institution, which may properly be called a branch of his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be possible!" said the priest, clasping his hands in admiration.

"Proceed, Jacques," said Polidori.

The notary continued, in a rapid voice, for the scene was perfectly odious to him: "'The assisting loans of the bank have for their object, to alleviate one of the greatest calamities of the labourer—the interruption of his employment. They will, therefore, be only granted to artisans unemployed.

"'But other embarrassments must be anticipated, which afflict the employed labourer. Often an interruption of one or two days, frequently brought upon them by fatigue, or by the attention which a sick wife or child requires, or by being obliged to change their residence, deprives the workmen of their daily resources. They are then obliged to resort to the Mont-de-Piété, from which they obtain advances, at a great loss, or to clandestine pawnbrokers, who charge an enormous interest. Desirous, as far as possible, to alleviate the sufferings of his brethren, the founder of the bank has invested a revenue of twenty-five thousand francs upon articles, ten francs being the limit of the sum he is able to advance on each.

"'The borrowers shall not pay either expenses or interest, but they must prove that they follow an honourable profession, and furnish a declaration from their employer, which shall vouch for their morality.

"'At the end of two years, the articles which

cent., require no other written engagement; said that these loans are always regularly repaid. La Halle and its environs, above all, is the spot where these abominable negotiations are carried on.

* Our project, upon which we have consulted many well-informed and honourable workmen, is, undoubtedly, very imperfect; nevertheless, we offer it to the reflections of the persons who feel an interest in the working-classes, hoping that the germ of utility which it contains (we do not fear to assert it) may be made fruitful, by minds more powerful than our own.

† We borrow the following information from an eloquent and excellent work, published by M. Alphonse Esquiros, in the *Revue de Paris*, of June 11th, 1843: "The average number of the articles pawned with the commissioners of the eighth and twelfth districts, for *three francs*, is at least *five hundred* daily. The working population, that is reduced to such limited resources, obtain, from the Mont-de-Piété, (a public pawn-brokerage establishment, supported by government), the most trivial advances in proportion to their wants. At the present time, the advances of the Mont-de-Piété rise, in ordinary cases, to thirteen per cent.; but they increase, in a most frightful ratio, when they are made for a less time than one year. The articles deposited by the poorer classes, being generally of the first necessity, they are consequently withdrawn almost as soon as deposited; they are articles which are regularly pawned and withdrawn, once a week. Under these circumstances, let us suppose a loan of three francs; the interest paid by the borrower will then be calculated at two hundred and ninety-four per cent. per annum. The money which is amassed yearly in the chest of the Mont-de-Piété, is necessarily expended in supporting the hospitals. The sum is very considerable. In that year of distress, 1840, its revenue amounted to four hundred and twenty-two thousand two hundred and fifteen francs. It cannot be denied," says M. Esquiros, "with good reason, that this sum has a meritorious destination, for, coming from misery, it returns to misery; but, notwithstanding, this grave question arises: Is it right, that the relief of the poor should come from the poor? Let us, however," says M. Esquiros, "while demanding that great meliorations should take place at the Mont-de-Piété, render homage to the zeal of the present director, M. Delaroche, who has already introduced useful reforms."

[Interview between Rodolph and Sarah.]

shall not have been redeemed, shall be sold without any charge; the amount proceeding from the surplus of such sale, shall be placed at five per cent. interest, for the benefit of the borrower.

"At the expiration of five years, should this sum have not been called for, it shall become the property of the Poor Man's Bank, and being added to the consecutive returns of funds, will allow the number of loans to be successively augmented.*

"The administration and the office of the Poor Man's Bank, shall be established at No. 17, Rue du Temple, in a house purchased for that purpose, in the centre of this populous quarter of the City. An income of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated to the expenses of the administration of the Poor Man's Bank, of which shall be director for life ——"

Polidori interrupted the notary, and said to the priest: "You will see, sir, by the choice of director of this administration, whether Jacques knows how to repair the evil which he has involuntarily committed. You know that, by a mistake, which he deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of appropriating to himself a large sum of money, which was afterwards found."

"Without doubt."

"Well, it is to that honest fellow, that Jacques has given the life direction of this bank, with a salary of four thousand francs. Is not this admirable, M. Abbé?"

"There is nothing in the world which can now astonish me; or, rather, nothing has ever yet astonished me," said the priest; "the fer-

* We have always said, that in some of the small states of Italy, there exist gratuitous Loan Societies (Mont-de-Piété), which are charitable institutions, having considerable analogy with the establishment we are now imagining.

vent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend, were certain, sooner or later, to produce such a result. To consecrate his fortune to such a noble institution—oh, it is positively admirable!"

"More than a million! M. Abbé," said Polidori, "more than a million, amassed by dint of order, economy, and probity! and yet there have been wretches, capable of accusing Jacques of avarice! 'How can it be otherwise?' said they; 'his business brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and his life is a continued series of privations.'"

"To such, I would reply," said the abbé, enthusiastically, "that, for fifteen years, he lived like a poor man, that he might one day magnificently relieve the poor."

"Be then, at least, joyous and proud of what you have done," exclaimed Polidori, addressing Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy, overwhelmed, and his eyes fixed, appeared to be absorbed in profound meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbé, sorrowfully, "it is not in this world, that such virtues can be recompensed; his ambition looks higher!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, touching the notary lightly on the shoulder, "finish reading the paper."

The notary shuddered, passed his hand over his forehead, and then, addressing the priest, said: "Your pardon, M. Abbé; I was meditating on the immense extension that this bank may attain, by the mere accumulation of its revenues. If every year the loans were regularly repaid, and they were not intrenched upon at the end of four years, it could afford to make gratuitous loans to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, or advances upon pledges. It is enormous! enormous! and I congratulate myself upon it," added he, thinking, with smothered rage, upon the value of the sacrifice imposed upon him. He rejoined: "I was, I believe, at the ——"

"The nomination of François Germain as director of this association," said Polidori.

Jacques Ferrand continued: "'An income of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated for the expenses and the administration of the 'Bank for the Unemployed Poor,' of whom shall be appointed as director, during his life, François Germain; and the keeper of which shall be Alfred Pipelet, at present porter of the house. The Abbé Dumont, to whom the funds requisite for the foundation of the establishment shall be delivered, shall institute a committee of superintendence, composed of the mayor and justice of the peace of the district, who shall select as their coadjutors in the committee, such persons as they shall consider most useful in the patronage and extension of the Poor Man's Bank; for the founder of the institution will consider the little he has done a thousand times overpaid, if some charitable persons will concur in his good work. The opening of the bank shall be announced with all possible publicity. In conclusion, the founder of the bank reiterates, that he ascribes no merit to himself in what he is doing for his fellow-men. His thought is merely the echo of the Divine command, 'LOVE ONE ANOTHER.'"

"And the place assigned to you in heaven will be near to Him who pronounced these immortal words!" exclaimed the abbé, hastening with delight to press the hand of Jacques Ferrand between his.

The notary was completely petrified; his strength failed him. Without replying to the congratulations of the abbé, he hastened to deliver to him, in treasury notes, the considerable sum which was necessary for the endowment of the association, and for the income of Morel, the lapidary.

"I dare hope," at length said Jacques Ferrand, "that you will not refuse this last mission confided to your charity; and, moreover, a foreigner, named Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me his opinion on the drawing up of this project, will, in some measure, lighten your labours, and will call upon you this very day to consult with you as to bringing this matter into operation, and will place himself at your disposal, if he can be of any service to you. With the exception of this person, I beg that you will, as far as I am concerned, keep this matter a profound secret."

"You are right. God knows what you are doing for your brethren; the rest is but of little import. My only regret is, not being able to give more than my zeal to this noble institution. It will, at least, be as ardent as yours is inexhaustible. But what is the matter with you? you turn pale! Do you feel ill?"

"A little, M. Abbé; reading so long a time, and the emotion which your benevolent words awaken in me, have increased the indisposition I have felt for some days past: pardon my weakness," said Jacques Ferrand, sitting down with difficulty; "there is nothing alarming in it, doubtless; but I am quite exhausted."

"You would, perhaps, do well to lie down a little," said the priest, with lively interest, "and to send for your physician."

"I am a physician," said Polidori. "The state of Jacques Ferrand demands great care, and I will attend to him."

The notary shuddered. "A short repose will, I trust, soon re-establish you," said the priest. "I leave you to it; but before that, I will give you a receipt for this sum."

While the priest was writing the receipt, Jacques Ferrand and Polidori exchanged a look which it would be impossible to describe.

"Come, come, take heart and hope for everything," said the priest, delivering the receipt to Jacques Ferrand. "For a long time, God will not permit one of his best servants to quit a life so usefully, so religiously employed. To-morrow I will return to see you. Adieu, sir. Adieu, my friend—my worthy and holy friend." The priest then left the room.

Jacques Ferrand and Polidori remained alone.

The abbé was hardly gone, when Jacques Ferrand uttered a most dreadful imprecation. His despair and rage, so long compressed, broke out with fury. His heart palpitating, his features drawn up, his eyes staring wildly, he walked with hurried step up and down his office, like a wild beast that could not break his chain.

Polidori, who appeared quite calm, attentively observed the notary.

"Hell and fury!" at last exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, in a voice bursting with passion. "My whole fortune swallowed up by these stupid and charitable works! I, who despise and execrate mankind!—I, who had lived only to deceive and rob them!—I, to found philanthropic establishments! to force me to it by infernal means! This master of yours is then a demon!" exclaimed he, in a state of fearful exasperation, and stopping suddenly before Polidori.

"I have no master," coolly replied the latter; "but, like yourself, I have a judge."

"To obey, like a simpleton, the slightest orders of this man!" rejoined Jacques Ferrand, with redoubled fury; "and that priest to be the dupe of my hypocrisy—every one of the praises which he, with such sincerity, bestowed upon me, pierced me like a dagger—and be compelled to constrain my feelings—continually to constrain! ——"

"If not—the scaffold!"

"Not to be able to escape this fatal domination! But, in fine, here's more than a million I have given up—if, with this house, I have still a hundred thousand francs remaining, it is as much as I can count upon. What can they require further?"

"You are not at the end of it yet. The prince knows, through Badinot, that your man of straw, Petit-Jean, was only your representative in the usurious loans made to the Viscount de Saint-Remy, whom you have, moreover, still under the name of Petit-Jean, so roughly ransomed for his forgeries. The sums which Saint-Remy has paid, had been lent to him by a great lady. This is, probably, another restitution which awaits you, but they adjourn it, doubtless, because it is more delicate ——"

"Chained—chained here!"

"As strongly as by an iron cable."

"And you my jailor! wretch!"

"What would you have? According to the prince's system, he punishes crime by crime—the accomplice by the accomplice."

"Oh! fury!"

"And, unfortunately, most impotent fury; for, until he shall send, to tell me Jacques Ferrand may leave his house, I shall remain beside you like your shadow. Hear me, then. As well as you, I have deserved the scaffold. If I fail to obey the orders I have received as your jailor, my head falls! You could not, therefore, have a keeper less easy to be bribed. As to both flying together, that's impossible. We could not take a step outside this house, without falling into the hands of those who are watching day and night this door, and that of the next house, our only issue, should we climb the wall."

"Death and fury! I know it well."

"Therefore, resign yourself, for all flight is impossible. Should it succeed, it offers but a doubtful chance eventually. The police would be employed to track our steps. On the contrary, you, by obeying, and I, by watching that you do obey, are both sure of not having our throats cut. Again I say, let us both be resigned."

"Do not exasperate me by your ironical calmness, or I will ——"

"Or you will—do what? I am on my guard; I am armed; and, even should you find the poisoned stiletto of Cecily ——"

"Be silent!"

"That would not assist you. You know that I must give, every two hours, to whom it may concern, a bulletin of thy precious health—an indirect method of having news of both of us. Not seeing me appear, they would suspect murder; you would be arrested, and—but stay—I am doing you injustice, in imagining you could be capable of such a crime. You have sacrificed more than a million of francs, to save your life, and you would risk your head for the silly and futile pleasure of killing me from revenge? Come, come, you are not so senseless as to commit yourself in that way!"

"It is because you know I cannot kill you, that you redouble all my sufferings, by thus exasperating them by your sarcastic language."

"Your position is so extraordinary, you cannot judge yourself; but, on my honour, it is very singular!"

"Oh, misery! inextricable misery! Whichever way I turn, death is before me! And then, to think that which I most fear is annihilation! Curses on me! on you! and the whole world!"

"Your misanthropy is more extensive than your philanthropy; it takes in all the world, the other only a small district of this city."

"Go on! mock at me, monster!"

"Would you rather I should crush you with reproaches?"

"I?"

"Whose fault is it, that we are reduced to this position?—'Tis yours! Why should you have worn, bound, like a relic, round your neck, my letter relating to that murder which gave you three hundred thousand francs?—that murder which we had so adroitly passed off as simple suicide?"

"Why did I so? Wretch! did I not give you fifty thousand francs for your co-operation in that crime, and for the letter which I demanded of you, that I might have a guarantee against you, and to prevent your having the power to destroy me? for, thus, you could not have denounced me without inculpating yourself. My life and fortune, therefore, were bound up in that letter, and that was the reason I always carried it so carefully about me."

"That's true! 'Twas very skilful on your part; for then I could gain nothing by denouncing you, except the satisfaction of marching to the scaffold, side by side with you; and, notwithstanding, your great sagacity has lost us both, while mine had, until now, insured to us impunity for this crime."

"Impunity! You see ——"

"Who could have foreseen what now has happened? But, in the ordinary course of things, our crime, thanks to me, ought to have been, and was unpunished."

"Thanks to you?"

"Yes; when we had blown out that man's brains, you would simply have counterfeited his handwriting, and have sent a letter to his sister, stating that, being completely ruined, he had killed himself from despair. You thought to make a show of monstrous cunning, in not mentioning, in that fictitious letter, the amount he had deposited with you. This was absurd; the deposit being known to the sister of this man, she would, necessarily, have demanded its restitution. It was, therefore, necessary to speak of this deposit, in case doubts should have arisen as to the reality of the suicide. You would have been the last person in the world to be suspected. How could they imagine that, having killed a man, in order to retain a sum he had confided to you, you could be fool enough to mention in the forged letter this deposit? And what did happen, consequently?—They believed the suicide! Thanks to your reputation for probity, you were enabled to deny the receipt of such a sum, and they believed the brother killed himself, after having spent in dissipation the fortune of the sister."

"But of what consequence is all this now? the crime has been discovered."

"And, thanks to whom? Was it my fault, if my letter was a weapon which cut two ways? Why were you weak enough, so much a sim-

pleton, as to deliver up this terrible instrument to that infernal Cecily?"

"Hold your peace! do not pronounce that name!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, with hideous terror.

"Be it so. I do not wish to drive you into an epileptic fit. You must clearly see, that, calculating only upon the usual course of justice, our mutual precautions were sufficient. But the extraordinary measures of him who holds us in his irresistible grasp, takes a more certain course!"

"Oh! I know it but too well!"

"He thinks, that to deprive a criminal of his head does not sufficiently atone for the injuries he has done. With the proof he now has in his hands, should he determine to deliver us to justice, what would result from that? Two bodies, neither more nor less, fit only to fatten a churchyard; that would not suffice for him."

"Tears, and agonies, and tortures, are what this prince—this demon, requires. But I do not know him; I have never done him harm: why should he so obstinately pursue me?"

"Moreover, he pretends to feel the good or evil done to other men, whom he so innocently calls his brothers—and then he knows all those whom you have injured, and punishes you according to his system."

"By what right does he so?"

"Come, Jacques, between ourselves, let us not talk of right; he had the power, judicially, to cut off your head. What would have been the result? The only two relations that you had are dead—the state would have seized upon your fortune, to the detriment of those you have despoiled. Now, see the difference. By making your life the price of all your fortune, Morel, the lapidary, the father of Louise, whom you dishonoured, is now, with all his family, secured from want. Madame de Fermont, the sister of De Renneville, the pretended suicide, regains her three hundred thousand francs. Germain, whom you had falsely accused of theft, is reinstated in the opinion of the world, and has given to him an honourable position, at the head of this new Bank for the Unemployed Poor, which you have been compelled to found, to remedy and expiate the injuries you have done. Between villains, we may acknowledge so much to each other. But, frankly, looking at this question as he does, who now holds us in his talons, society would have gained nothing by your death—it gains much by your life."

"And it is that which causes all my fury! but that is not my only torment!"

"The prince knows it well. And now, what will he decide with regard to us? I cannot divine it! He promised us to spare our lives, if we should blindly execute his orders—he will keep his word. But should he think our crimes have not sufficiently been expiated, he will well know how to render death a thousand times more acceptable than the life he leaves to us. You do not know him! When he thinks he is called upon to be inexorable, there is no executioner more barbarous than he is. He must have had the devil at his orders, to have discovered what I had gone to do in Normandy. Besides, he has more than one demon in his service; for that Cecily—whom may the lightning blast! ——"

"Again I tell you, speak not of her! mention not that name—not that name!"

"Yes! yes! may the lightning blast the woman who bears that name! 'Tis she who has lost all. Our heads would be in safety on our shoulders, had it not been for your besotted passion for that creature."

Instead of flying into a passion, Jacques Ferrand replied, in a tone of deep depression: "Do you know her? Tell me, did you ever see that woman?"

"Never! 'Tis said she is beautiful. I know it."

"Beautiful!" rejoined the notary, scornfully. "Hear me!" he added, with a degree of desperate bitterness. "Say no more—speak not of that you can know nothing of. Do not accuse me—what I have done, you would have done, had you been in my place."

"I place my life at the mercy of a woman!"

"Yes, of that one! Could I but hope again, that which I did once hope, I would do it again."

"By all the powers of hell, he is still under the spell!" exclaimed Polidori, astonished.

"Listen to me," said the notary, in a voice at once calm, low, and, as it were, now and then emphasized with bursts of incurable despair—"listen! You know that I love gold—you know what I have braved to acquire it. To count, in thought, the sums that I possessed—to see them doubled by my avarice—to endure every privation, and to know that I was master of a treasure—this was my joy, my happiness! Yes! to possess—not to enjoy, but still to treasure up—that was my life! But a month ago, had I been told that I must choose to lose my fortune or my head, I would have given my head."

"What virtue is in possession, then, if life is taken from you?"

"Ask me, then, what pleasure is there in possession, if we do not use that which we possess? When I was worth a million, did I lead the life of one possessed of so much wealth? No! I lived like a poor man. I wished to possess, for the sole pleasure of possessing."

"But again I ask, what pleasure in possessing, if one dies?"

"To die while still possessing! to enjoy to the last moment that which made you brave privations, infamy, the scaffold! yes, to say, even with one's head upon the block, *I do possess!* Yes, look you! death is sweet, compared to the torments one endures, to see yourself during life dispossessed, as I am, of all that I have amassed with so much difficulty—with so much danger! To say, each hour, each minute of the day, I, who had more than a million—I, who have endured the most painful privations, to preserve, to augment that treasure—I, who, in ten years hence, would have doubled, trebled it—I—I have nothing left—nothing! It is too horrible: it is to die, not every day, but every minute of the day! Yes, to this dreadful agony, which may last for years and years, I should have a thousand times preferred a sudden and certain death, which should have struck me before an atom of that treasure had been torn from me. Again I say, I should have died still crying: 'I possess!'"

Polidori looked at his accomplice in profound amazement.

"I can no longer understand you. Why, then, did you obey the orders of a man, who has only to say one word, and your head falls? Why have you now preferred to live without your treasure, if life appears so horrible to you?"

"It is," said the notary, speaking lower and lower, "because to die, is no longer to think—to die, is to become nothing! And, Cecily!"

"And you still hope?" cried Polidori, more and more amazed.

"I do not hope—I possess."

"What?"

"Remembrance."

"But you are never to see her again—and she has sacrificed your life."

"Yet I still love her, and more madly than before. For me to die!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, with a burst of tears and sobs, which contrasted strangely with the deathlike calmness of his previous words. "Yes!" rejoined he, "I still love her, and I will not die, that I may be able still to plunge and plunge again into that furnace which consumes me with its slow fire! for you do not know—that night—that night on which I saw her looking so beautiful, so impassioned, so infatuating—that night is always present to my memory. That voluptuous, but terrible picture, is there engraven—always there—there before my eyes! Let them be open, or closed by a feverish drowsiness, I always see her dark and burning glance, which makes the marrow boil within my bones! I always feel her breath upon my forehead! I always hear her voice!"

"But these are frightful torments!"

"Frightful! yes, frightful!—But death!—annihilation!—to lose for ever this remembrance, as living as the reality—to forego this remembrance which tear, which devour, which inflame me! No, no, no! Live! live—poor, despised, degraded—live in the galleys—but live! provided that thought remains to me—since this infernal being has all my thoughts—Cecily alone reigns in my mind!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a serious tone, which contrasted strangely with his habitual irony, "I have seen much suffering, but never tortures which can compare with yours. He who holds us in his power, could not be more merciless. He has condemned you to live, or rather to wait for death in terrible anguish; for what you have told me, explains the alarming symptoms which daily develop themselves in you—the cause of which I have searched for in vain."

"But there is nothing serious in these symptoms; I am suffering from exhaustion, and from the reaction of my sorrows. I am not in danger, am I?"

"No, no! but your symptoms are quite serious; you must not aggravate them. There are certain thoughts which you must banish, or you expose yourself to great danger."

"I will do any thing that you direct, provided it can save my life, for I do not wish to die. The priests speak of the damned—never could a torture be devised for them, equal to what I endure. Assailed by passion and avarice, I have two living wounds instead of one, and I suffer from both, equally. The loss of my fortune is a terrible blow; but death would be awful! I wish to live, although life should be an incessant torment! I dare not call for death, for death would annihilate my fatal happiness—that mirror of my thoughts, in which Cecily is ever present."

"You have, at least, the consolation," said Polidori, resuming his habitual irony, "of thinking of the good which you have done in expiation of your crimes."

"Yes, rail on! rail on! turn me over on the burning coals. You know very well, miserable wretch! that I detest mankind; you know that these expiations which are extorted from me, and in which a weak mind might find consolation, inspire me with hatred and rage against those who have forced them upon me, and against those also, who profit by them. Thunder and murder! the thought, that while I am dragging on a frightful existence, having my soul and body held together only that I may be the prey of tortures which would daunt the most intrepid—the man whom I abhor and despise will live in happiness upon the property which has been forced from me; that widow and her daughter will bless God for the three hundred thousand francs which I have returned; that Morel and his daughter, will live in comfort and ease; that Germain will be raised to an honourable and secure position; and that priest, who blessed me while my heart was swimming in gall and in blood, I could have stabbed with ecstacy! It is too overpowering! My head will burst at last," said he, leaning his forehead on his hands, convulsively clenched. "My ideas wander in darkness; I can no longer resist these fits of powerless rage—these torments for ever present—for ever renewing their strength—and all for you! for you, Cecily! Cecily! Do you know, do you ever think of the torments I endure, demon fresh from hell?"

And Jacques Ferrand, exhausted by the burst of frantic excitement, fell back upon his seat, uttering deep and inarticulate groans. This paroxysm of convulsive and desperate rage did not astonish Polidori. Endowed with superior mind, and possessing thorough medical knowledge, he saw clearly that the rage of the notary, in being compelled to disgorge his blood-stained gold, combined with his frenzy for the voluptuous being who had been his avenging fury, had kindled within his miserable frame a devouring and inextinguishable fever. Nor was this all: Polidori discovered in the symptoms which assailed Jacques Ferrand, the sure indications of one of the most horrible forms of disease which has ever afflicted humanity—a disease which those severe moralists and profound observers, Paulus and Arœteus, have so wonderfully traced the terrifying picture.

* * *

A sudden knock was now heard at the door of the study.

"Come, Jacques," said Polidori to the notary, "pray recover yourself; some one is coming."

The notary did not hear the appeal. Half-reclined upon his desk, he was twisting about in a convulsive spasm. The physician opened the door, and discovered the principal clerk of the office, who, with a pale and agitated countenance, exclaimed: "I must instantly speak to M. Ferrand."

"Silence! he is at this moment very unwell, and cannot attend to you," said Polidori, in a low voice; and leaving the study, he closed the door behind him.

"Ah, sir! you are M. Ferrand's best friend. Come to his aid; there is not a moment to be lost."

"What do you mean?"

"According to the orders of M. Ferrand, I waited upon the Countess Macgregor, to inform her that it was impossible for him to visit her to-day, as she had desired."

"Well?"

"That lady, who appears now out of danger, asked me into her chamber. She exclaimed, in a threatening tone: 'Return, and tell M. Ferrand, that if he is not here within half-an-hour, I shall have him arrested for forgery before the day closes; for the child whom he has pretended to be dead, is alive. I know to whom he surrendered her, and I know also where she now is.'"*

"The woman was mad," replied Polidori, coolly shrugging his shoulders.

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I am convinced of it."

"I supposed so at first, but the collected manner of the countess dissipated my suspicion."

"Her head has doubtless been weakened by her sickness, and the visionary always believe in their dreams."

"You are probably correct, sir; for I could not explain to myself the threats of the countess against a man so respectable as M. Ferrand."

"There is no reason whatever in her accusations."

"I must also inform you, that when I was leaving the chamber of the countess, one of her servants entered quickly the room, saying: 'His highness will be here within an hour.'"

"Did the woman say that?" exclaimed Polidori.

"Yes, sir; and I was very much astonished, ignorant of what highness she alluded to."

"There can be no doubt that it is the prince," said Polidori to himself. "He with the Countess Sarah, whom he had determined never to see again! I cannot divine the reason of this visit, but I do not like it. Our situation will not be improved;" and addressing the clerk, he added: "Be assured, sir, there is nothing serious in this. It is the diseased fancy of a sick person. I will, however, impart to M. Ferrand all that you have communicated to me."

CHAPTER VIII.

RODOLPH AND SARAH.

We will now conduct the reader to the house of the Countess Macgregor, who had just passed a crisis of delirium and suffering, which had aroused the fears of every one, respecting her life. The sun was beginning to decline. Sarah was seated in a large *fauteuil*, and, supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was examining herself, with close attention, in a mirror which one of the servants, kneeling, held before her. The scene occurred in the room where Chouette had committed her attempt at assassination. The marble paleness of the countess was rendered still more striking, by the deep black of her eyes and hair. A long, white dress of muslin enveloped her form.

"Give me the bandeau of pearls," said she to one of her women, in a feeble but imperious tone.

"Let Betty tie it for you, you will only fatigue yourself; you have already been sufficiently imprudent ——"

"The bandeau! the bandeau!" said Sarah, impatiently, who arranged the ornament upon her forehead, according to her taste. "Now clasp it, and leave me," said she to her maids. As they were retiring, she added: "Let M. Ferrand, the notary, be conducted to the small blue parlour." Then she added, with an expression of pride which was ill dissembled: "When his Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein arrives, introduce him here. At last," she said, when left alone, throwing herself back in the chair, "at last, I touch the crown, the dream of my life: the prediction will be fulfilled."

"Calm your excitement," said her brother, severely; "even yesterday, your life was despaired of; a disappointment might inflict a fatal blow."

"You are right; the blow would be awful, for I never was so near the consummation of my hopes. I am now certain of their attainment; what has sustained me from sinking under my sufferings, has been the constant thought, that I should profit by the important disclosure which that woman made, at the time she wounded me."

"While you were delirious, your mind constantly reverted to the same thought."

"Because that thought alone sustained my endangered life. What a prospect! a sovereign princess!—almost a queen!" added she, with rapture.

"I entreat you, once more, not to cherish these idle dreams; the awakening will be terrible."

"Idle dreams! When Rodolph shall know, that this young girl, now a prisoner at Saint-Lazare, and formerly confided to the notary, who forged a certificate of her death, is actually our child, do you believe that ——"

Seyton interrupted his sister: "I believe that princes make natural obligations yield, invariably, to reasons of state, and political considerations."

"Have you such little confidence in my skill?"

"The prince is no longer the artless and passionate young man, whom you formerly allured; that season has passed for him, and for you also, my sister."

"Do you know why I wish to adorn my head with this pearl bandeau? why I have clothed myself in this white dress? It is because that, the first time that Rodolph saw me at the Court of Gerolstein, I was dressed in white, and wore this same bandeau upon my head."

"Is it possible," said Thomas Seyton, with surprise, "that you wish to recall those remembrances? Do you not, on the contrary, fear their influence?"

"I am better acquainted with Rodolph than you are. My features, changed by age and suffering, are certainly no longer the same with those of the young girl he so fondly loved—the only one he ever loved—the only one, for I was the first; and that love always leaves ineffaceable traces upon the heart of man. You may rest assured, my brother, that the sight of this dress, will not only recall to the mind of the prince, the recollection of his love, but also that of his youth; and with men, these early associations are always delightful and precious."

"But heart-rending thoughts are joined with these pleasant memories; the melancholy termination of your love, the odious conduct of the prince's father towards you, your obstinate silence, when, after your marriage with Count Macgregor, Rodolph demanded your daughter, at that time quite a child—your daughter, of whose death you informed him ten years ago, by means of a letter couched in the most freezing terms. Can you forget that, from that time,

* The reader is aware, that Sarah supposed that Fleur-de-Marie was still imprisoned in Saint-Lazare, as Chouette had informed her before stabbing her.

the prince has been touched by no feelings but contempt and hatred for you?"

"Hatred has yielded to compassion; since he has heard of my wound, he has daily despatched the Baron de Graün to inquire respecting my health."

"It was a mere dictate of humanity."

"He has this moment informed me, that he would visit me; the concession is immense."

"He believes that you are near the grave, and he comes for a final farewell. You were wrong not to convey, by letter, the revelation you are about to make."

"I have my reasons for acting in this manner. The disclosure will fill him with surprise and joy, and I shall be with him, to take advantage of his first emotions. Yes, to-day or never, he must say to me: 'Marriage must legitimatize the birth of our child.' If he says so, his word is sacred, and the object of my life is attained."

"Yes, it will be, if he makes that promise to you."

"Nothing must be neglected to draw that promise from him, at this important crisis. I know that Rodolph hates me, although I cannot divine the motive of his hatred, for I have never failed towards him, in the part which I imposed upon myself."

"Perhaps you have; for he is not a man that hates without reason."

"No matter; once assured that his daughter is found, he will overcome his aversion for me; he will not shrink from any sacrifice to insure to his child the inheritance and destiny to which she is entitled—to render her as happy as she has been thus far miserable."

"He may, perhaps, assure to his daughter the most brilliant rank; but between that reparation and the resolution of marrying you, in order to legitimatize the birth of the child, there is an abyss."

"His paternal love will fill that abyss."

"But the unfortunate girl has, doubtless, thus far lived in an abject and wretched situation."

"Rodolph will be the more anxious to elevate her, on account of her past degradation."

"But, think of it; would he permit her to assume her place among the sovereign families of Europe? would he acknowledge her as a daughter, in the presence of these kings of whom he is either a relation or an ally?"

"Do you not know his singular, imperious, and resolute character—his chivalric exaggeration of all that he regards as an obligation of justice or duty?"

"But this poor child has, perhaps, been so situated by the misery in which she has lived, that the prince, probably, instead of feeling an attraction towards her ——"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Sarah, interrupting her brother; "is she not as beautiful a girl, as she was lovely as a child? Has not Rodolph, without knowing her relationship, taken so much interest in her as to charge himself with her future support? Has he not already sent her to Bouqueval farm, whence we removed her?"

"Yes, thanks to your obstinate determination to sever all the ties of affection, which bound the prince, in the idle hope of drawing him for consolation to you."

"And yet, if I had not indulged that hope, I should not have discovered, at the risk of my life, the secret of my daughter's existence! Was it not by means of that woman, who took her from the farm, that I learned the base deceit which Jacques Ferrand, the notary, practised upon me?"

"It is unfortunate that I was refused admittance this morning to Saint-Lazare, where, it is said, that unfortunate child now is. In spite of my earnest entreaties, they would not answer any of the inquires which I made, because I had no letter of introduction to the director of the prison. I have written to the prefect, in your name, but I shall probably have no answer until to-morrow; and the prince will be here now soon, and I regret once more, that you are unable to present to him your daughter with your own hands. It would have been better to have waited until we removed her from the prison, before sending for the grand duke."

"To wait! have we any certainty that my health will continue as it now is until to-morrow? Perhaps I am only sustained by the energy of my ambition."

"But what proof will you present to the prince? Will he believe you?"

"He will believe me when he reads the commencement of the revelation, which I was writing under the dictation of that woman, when she stabbed me—a revelation, of which I have not forgotten a single circumstance. He will believe me when he reads your correspondence with Jacques Ferrand and Madame Seraphin, up to the supposed death of the child. He will believe me when he hears the confession of the notary, who, frightened by my threats, will soon be here. He will believe me when he sees the portrait of my daughter, taken at the age of four, to which, even now, as that woman said, she still bears a striking resemblance. These proofs will suffice to convince the prince that I tell the truth, and to prompt in his mind that impulse, which will make me a queen. Were it only attained for one day, for one hour, I should die happy."

At this moment, the noise of a carriage was heard entering the court-yard.

"It is he! it is Rodolph!" exclaimed Sarah, addressing Thomas Seyton.

He approached quickly a curtain, raised it, and said: "Yes, it is the prince; he is descending from the carriage."

"Leave me alone. Now is the decisive moment," said Sarah, with extraordinary composure; for an unnatural ambition, merciless and selfish, had always been her sole motive of action. In the almost miraculous reappearance of her daughter, she discerned nothing but a new facility for attaining the end of her aspirations. After hesitating whether he should leave the room, Thomas Seyton suddenly approached his sister, and said: "I must be the one to inform the prince, by what means your daughter, whom we supposed dead, has been saved. Such conversation would be too dangerous for you; a violent emotion would kill you; and after so long a separation, the sight of the prince, the recollection of the past, will be a dangerous situation."

"Give me your hand, brother," said Sarah; and placing the hand upon her impassible heart, she added, with a cold and gloomy smile: "Am I moved?"

"No, not in the least; not the smallest precipitation of pulse," said Seyton, with surprise. "I know your powers of self-control, but at a

moment when a crown or death is before you, your calmness confounds me. The disappointment of this last hope would be fatal."

"Why this surprise, my brother? You know that nothing—nothing—can hurry the throbs of this marble heart. It will only palpitate, when I place upon my brow a sovereign crown. I hear Rodolph; leave me."

"But——"

"Leave me!" exclaimed Sarah, in a tone so imperious and resolute, that her brother left the apartment a moment before the prince was introduced.

When Rodolph entered the room, his look indicated deep compassion; but on seeing Sarah, seated in her *fauteuil*, and decked in such a studied manner, he started back, and his countenance immediately assumed a dark and mistrustful expression. The countess, divining his thoughts, said to him, in a mild and feeble tone: "You expected to find me dying, and came to receive my last farewell."

"I have always regarded as sacred, the last wishes of those who are about to leave this world; but if a sacrilegious deceit is practised——"

"Be assured that I have not deceived you. I have, I believe, but a few hours to live. Pardon, I beseech you, a final caprice. I wished to spare you the gloomy habiliments of the death-bed; I wished to die arrayed as when I first saw you. After seventeen years' separation, I meet you once more. Thank you! oh, thank you! And do you, in your turn, render thanks to God, for having moved you to grant my last request. Had you refused me, I should have carried with me to the grave, a secret which will constitute the joy, the happiness of your life—a joy, to be sure, mingled with its tears, as every human felicity is—but you would purchase that felicity, with half of the remaining days of your life."

"What do you mean?" asked the prince, with surprise.

"Yes, Rodolph, if you had not visited me, this secret would have been buried in my tomb. It would have been my only vengeance; and yet, I fear, that courage would have deserted me. Although I have suffered much from your hands, I should have shared with you that supreme happiness, which is in reserve for you for a long period—a very long period, I hope."

"But what do you mean, madame?"

"When you know it, you will be unable to comprehend my delay, in imparting the information to you, for you will regard the revelation as a miracle from heaven. But, how strange it is, that I, who, with one word, can pour into your soul happiness it never knew before, should feel, although my moments are numbered, an indescribable happiness in delaying your expectation; and besides, I know your heart, and in spite of the firmness of your character, I fear to announce to you, without preparation, such an incredible discovery. Emotions of sudden joy have also their dangers."

"Your pallor increases; you can hardly restrain your violent agitation," said Rodolph. "I believe that this scene is grave and solemn."

"Grave and solemn," added Sarah, with a voice tremulous with emotion; for, in spite of her usual composure, while thinking of the immense importance of the revelation she was about to make, she felt more agitated than she had anticipated. After a moment's silence, the countess, being unable any longer to restrain her emotions, exclaimed: "Rodolph, our daughter lives!"

"Our daughter?"

"She lives!"

These words, the accent of truth in which they were uttered, reached the heart of the prince. "Our child? my daughter?" he repeated, approaching hastily the *fauteuil* of Sarah.

"She is not dead. I have the most conclusive proofs of the fact. To-morrow, you shall see her."

"My daughter! my daughter!" exclaimed Rodolph, scarcely able to conceive the possibility of the disclosure; "can it be that she still lives?" Then, suddenly reflecting upon the improbability of the event, and fearing that he might be attacked by some new deception, he exclaimed: "No! no! it must be a dream! You are deceiving me! it is a stratagem! an unworthy lie!"

"Hear me, Rodolph."

"No; I am aware of your ambition; I know of what you are capable, and I divine the purpose of this deceit."

"You speak truly; I am capable of everything. Yes, I did intend to deceive you; a few days before I was mortally wounded, I desired to find a young girl, to present to you as our child, whose loss you regretted so bitterly."

"Enough, madame! enough!"

"After this confession, perhaps you will believe me; or, at any rate, you will be compelled to submit to evidence.

"To evidence?"

"Yes, Rodolph, I repeat it, I did wish to deceive you; I desired to substitute an obscure young girl, in the place of the one for whom your tears flow; but God ordained that, at the moment when I was in the act of taking this sacrilegious step, I should receive a fatal blow."

"You! at that moment?"

"It was the will of God, that, for the purpose of practising this deception, there should be proposed to me—do you know who?—our daughter!"

"In the name of heaven!—are you delirious?"

"I am not delirious, Rodolph. In that casket, containing papers, and a portrait, which will prove the truth of my assertions, you will also find a memorandum, stained with my blood."

"With your blood?"

"The woman who told me that our daughter still lives, was dictating to me that revelation, when she stabbed me with a dagger."

"And who was she? How did she know?"

"It was to her that our daughter was entrusted, after it was pretended that she was dead."

"But who is this woman? what is her name? can she be believed? where did you form an acquaintance with her?"

"I tell you, Rodolph, that the hand of Providence is to be clearly seen in the discovery. A few months ago, you rescued a young child from misery, and provided her with a refuge in the country; did you not?"

"Yes, at Bouqueval."

"Jealousy and hatred distracted me. I caused this young girl to be taken from that farm, by the woman of whom I speak."

"And the poor child was conveyed to Saint-Lazare."

"Where she now is."

"She is no longer there. You are not aware of the frightful evil of which you have been the cause, in tearing the poor child from the retreat where I placed her; but——"

"Is that young girl no longer at Saint-Lazare? and do you speak of an awful calamity?"

"A monster of cupidity was goaded by selfishness, to accomplish her destruction: he has drowned her. But answer me; you said that ——"

"My daughter!" burst from the lips of Sarah, as she raised herself upright, and stood immoveable as a marble statue.

"What do you say? Good God!" cried Rodolph.

"My daughter!" exclaimed Sarah, with a face livid with fear, and distorted with despair; "they have killed my daughter!"

"Goualeuse your daughter!" repeated Rodolph, shrinking from the unfortunate woman with horror.

"Goualeuse! yes, yes! that is the name which the hag Chouette told me. Dead! dead!" continued Sarah, still immoveable in her statuesque position. "Have they murdered her?"

"Sarah, recover yourself," continued Rodolph, as pale and agitated as the countess. "Answer me: was Goualeuse the girl whom Chouette, instigated by you, tore from the Bouqueval farm ——"

"My daughter! *our* daughter!"

"She!!"

"And they have murdered her!"

"Oh, no, no! you are still delirious; it cannot be! You do not know—you cannot conceive what frightful woe such an identity would entail upon you. Recover, I beseech you. Speak in a quiet tone, and let me hear you tell calmly this sad tale. We are frequently deceived by appearances, by fancied resemblance; we are always inclined to believe what we wish to be true. I do not address reproaches to you; but tell me, clearly and calmly, the reasons which have induced you to adopt this belief. The fact cannot be true; it ought not—it must not be!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rodolph, in a feeble voice: "After I heard of your marriage, I determined to marry myself. It was, therefore, impossible to keep my daughter, at that time four years old, near me."

"But at that time, I most earnestly entreated, besought, prayed, that you would commit her to my care. My letters remained unanswered: the only one which I received, announced her death."

"I wished to revenge myself for your contempt, by refusing your child. It was a base act, I confess it, for my moments are numbered: this last blow kills me."

"No, no! I do not believe you—I will not believe you! Goualeuse my daughter! would God have permitted such an affliction?"

"Hear me, I say! When she was four years old, my brother entrusted her to Madame Seraphin, the widow of an old servant of his own, that she might take care of the child until she had reached a sufficient age to be sent to a boarding-school. The sum intended for her support, was deposited, by my brother, in the hands of a notary renowned for his probity. The letters of that man and of Madame Seraphin, addressed at that time to me and my brother, are in that casket there. Within a year, they informed me that the health of my child was declining; and eight months after that, they informed me that she was dead, and sent me a certificate of her death. About the same time, Madame Seraphin entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having delivered our daughter to Chouette, by the hands of an outcast now confined in the bagnio at Rochefort. I was writing down this declaration of Chouette, when she stabbed me. The paper is there, with the portrait of our daughter, taken when she was four years old. Examine everything—letters, papers, portrait, declaration; and you, who have seen the poor child, can judge."

After these words, which entirely exhausted her strength, she fell fainting into her chair.

Rodolph remained astonished at this disclosure. There are misfortunes so unforeseen, so overpowering, that we refuse to admit their certainty, although forced thereto by the most conclusive and irresistible evidence. Persuaded as the prince was, of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, but one hope sustained the unhappy father, which was to convince himself that she was not his daughter. With an unnatural calmness, which frightened Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and commenced reading the letters, one by one, and examining with the most scrutinizing attention the papers which accompanied them. Those letters, upon which the postmark was stamped, written by the notary and his accomplice, to the countess and her brother, related to the childhood of Fleur-de-Marie, and to the investment of the funds designed for her support. Rodolph could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence. The declaration of Chouette was confirmed by the information of which we have spoken at the commencement of this narrative; information collected by the commands of Rodolph, and which pointed out Pierre Tournemine—a galley-slave at Rochefort—as the individual who had received Fleur-de-Marie from the hands of Madame Seraphin, to deliver her to Chouette. The unfortunate child had herself identified this woman as the torment of her infancy, at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress. Rodolph could no longer doubt the truth of what the countess alleged, concerning these individuals. The certificate of death appeared perfectly formal; but Ferrand had himself confessed to Cecily, that a forged certificate of death had been the means by which he had obtained a large sum of money, which was settled as an annuity upon a young girl, whom he had caused to be drowned by Nicholas Martial, at the Island of the Ravageur. It was, therefore, with increasing and fearful anguish, that the terrible conviction dawned upon Rodolph's mind, that Goualeuse was his daughter, and that she no longer lived. Everything confirmed this fatal certainty.

Before condemning Jacques Ferrand, upon the evidence furnished by himself to Cecily, the prince, in his lively interest for Goualeuse, had sent to Asnières for information; and had learned, in substance, that two women—the one old, and the other young—had been drowned in the Seine, while going to the Island of the Ravageur, and that public report accused the Martials of this new crime.

We must finally state, that, in spite of the cares of Doctor Griffon, the Count de Saint-Remy, and Louve, Fleur-de-Marie, whose life

had been for a long time despaired of, was just becoming convalescent; and that the feeble condition of both her body and mind, was such, that she had not been able to inform Rodolph or Madame Georges of her situation. This concurrence of circumstances left not the least hope to the prince. A final trial was reserved; he cast his eyes upon the portrait, which he had feared to look at, and the blow was terrible. In that infantine and charming face, already radiant with the divine beauty of a cherub, he found the identical countenance of Fleur-de-Marie. Her finely-delineated nose; her noble forehead; her small mouth, already sad—for Madame Seraphin had said to Sarah, in one of the letters which Rodolph had just read: "The child asks incessantly for her mother, and is very melancholy." There were those large and lovely eyes of blue—"as blue as blue bells"—as Chouette had said to Sarah, when the hag recognised in the miniature, the features of the poor child, whose infancy she had persecuted, under the name of Pegriotte.

At the sight of this portrait, the violent and tumultuous feelings of Rodolph, were smothered by his tears. He sunk back in his chair, overwhelmed, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed violently.

While Rodolph was weeping, the features of the countess were convulsed. At the very moment when she expected that the dream of her ambitious life would become a reality, the last ray of hope, which had thus far sustained her, was extinguished for ever. This sudden disappointment reacted mortally upon her health, which was temporarily restored. The countess waited with fear the first word of Rodolph, sunk in her chair, agitated with a nervous tremour, her hands clasped upon her knees, her eyes fixed. Well aware of the impetuosity of the prince's character, she expected that a violent burst of passion would succeed the paroxysm of grief, which now convulsed the frame of the resolute and inflexible man. Rodolph suddenly raised his head, wiped the tears from his eyes, stood erect, and approaching Sarah, with his arms crossed upon his breast, in a threatening and merciless manner, looked upon her for a moment, in silence, and then said, in a deep voice: "It was so ordained; I drew my sword against my father, and I meet, in my child, the just punishment of a parricide! Hear me, madame."

"You a parricide! Gracious God! what a fatal day! What new woe can you disclose?"

"You must hear, in these last moments of your life, all the evils, all the calamities, and the remorse, which your implacable ambition, your hardened selfishness, has caused. Hear me, heartless and faithless woman! Unnatural mother! hear me!"

"Mercy, Rodolph! mercy!"

"There is no mercy for you, who, moved by no pity for a sincere love, while affecting to partake it, sacrificed it to your inhuman selfishness and execrable pride;—no mercy for you, who armed the son against the father;—no mercy for you, who, instead of hanging, with the tenderest devotion, over the infancy of your child, abandoned her to mercenary hands, thus preferring a rich marriage to the comfort, virtue, and life of your offspring, as you had formerly preferred your ungovernable ambition to the most sacred ties;—no mercy for you, who, having first refused to surrender my child to my yearning affection, have just murdered her by your sacrilegious guilt. May curses light upon your head! evil genius of myself and my race!"

"Good God! he cannot be reached by compassion! Leave me! leave me!"

"I will compel you to listen. Do you remember the last day I saw you, seventeen years ago? You could no longer conceal the consequences of our secret union, which, like yourself, I considered indissoluble. I knew the inflexible character of my father. I knew what political alliance he expected to accomplish by my marriage. I braved his indignation, and declared to him that you were my wife before God and before men, and that you would soon become a mother. The rage of my father knew no bounds. He would not believe in our marriage. Such an extent of audacity appeared to him impossible. He threatened me with his severest indignation, if I presumed to mention the folly to him. I loved you most truly, most passionately—a dupe of the arts you practised upon me. I thought that your marble heart had beaten kindly for me, and I replied to my father, that I never would receive another wife. At those words, his anger became ungovernable. He poured the most insulting epithets upon you. He exclaimed, that our marriage was void; that to punish you for your audacity, he would place you in the pillory. Yielding to my passion, and to the vehemence of my character, I dared to forbid my father, my sovereign, to use such language towards my wife. I dared to threaten him. Exasperated by the insult, my father raised his hand against me. Blind by the excess of rage, I drew my sword, and rushed upon him. Had it not been for the interference of Sir Walter Murphy, who arrested the blow, I should have been a parricide in fact, as I was already in intention. Do you hear? a parricide in your defence!"

"Alas! alas! I was ignorant of that misfortune!"

"In vain I have thus far attempted to expiate my crime; the blow which has reached my heart to-day, is my punishment."

"But I! have not I suffered much from the harshness of your father, who broke our marriage? Why do you accuse me of not having loved you, when——"

"Why?" exclaimed Rodolph, interrupting Sarah, and casting upon her a look of withering contempt. "Learn the reason then, and be no longer astonished at the horror which you inspire, after that fatal scene in which I had threatened my father. I surrendered my sword. I was imprisoned secretly. Polidori, by whose agency our marriage had been performed, was arrested. He proved that the union was null, for that the clergyman who officiated was not authorised to act—was not a clergyman—and that you, your brother, and myself, had all been deceived. To disarm my father's wrath, Polidori did more. He delivered one of your letters to your brother, which had been intercepted during Seyton's journey."

"Heavens! is it possible?"

"Do you now understand the reason of my contempt?"

"Enough! enough!"

"In that letter you unveiled your ambitious projects, with most revolting impudence. You treated me with cold scorn. You sacrificed me to your infernal pride. I was only the instrument of the royal destiny which had been pre-

dicted for you. In short, you complained in it, of the long life of my father!"

"Wretch that I am, at this hour I understand everything!"

"And, in order to defend you, I had threatened the life of my father! When on the next day, without addressing to me a single reproach, he showed me that letter, each line of which revealed the blackness of your soul, I could only fall on my knees before him, and beg for mercy. From that day, I have been pursued by unceasing remorse. I soon left Germany for a long voyage, and then I commenced the expiation which I had imposed upon myself, and which will end only with my life—to reward the good, to punish the wicked; to comfort those who suffer; to fathom all the wounds of humanity, in order to tear some souls from perdition—such is the task which I have imposed upon myself."

"It is a noble and holy task, and worthy of you."

"If I speak to you of that vow," replied Rodolph, with bitter disdain—"of that vow, which I have fulfilled to the extent of my ability, wherever I have been, it is not to solicit for it your praise. Hear me. I arrived recently in France. My residence in this country was not to be lost for the purposes of expiation. In my desire to assist unfortunate but honest people, I also wished to become acquainted with those classes who are overpowered by poverty, and reduced to a state of brutal depravity. Knowing as I do, that succour administered in a seasonable moment, that a few generous words even, are sufficient to save an unfortunate man from the abyss of woe, I wished to judge by personal observation. I therefore affected the dress and language of those I wished to observe. It was in one of these expeditions, that, for the first time, I—I met ——" Then, as if shrinking from the terrible disclosure, Rodolph, after a moment's hesitation, added: "No, no! I have not the courage."

"What more have you to tell me? Good heavens!"

"You will know it too soon; but," added he, with bitter irony, "you seem to be so much interested in past events, that I must speak of those which preceded my return to France. After long voyages, I finally arrived in Germany, and hastened to obey the will of my father. I married a Prussian princess. During my absence, you had been expelled from the grand duchy. Hearing that you were married to the Count Macgregor, I earnestly entreated you for my daughter. You would not answer me; and notwithstanding all my inquiries, I never could learn to whose hands you had committed that poor child, for whom my father had liberally provided. Ten years since, a letter from you informed me that our daughter was dead. Alas! would to God she had died then! I should have been spared from the incurable grief which will henceforth torture my life."

"Now," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "I am no longer astonished at the aversion with which I have inspired you; the perusal of that letter explains it all. I feel that I cannot survive this last blow. Yes, I confess that pride and ambition have ruined me. Under a passionate exterior, I concealed an icy heart; I affected devotion and frankness, while filled with dissimulation and selfishness. Ignorant of the numerous reasons you had for despising and hating me, my rash hopes revived in all their strength. Since widowhood had disengaged us both, my faith in the prediction which promised me a crown, was restored; and when chance disclosed to me the existence of my daughter, I thought I saw in it a providential interference. Yes, I went so far as to believe that your aversion to me would yield to your love for your child, and that you would give me your hand, in order to restore to her the rank to which she is entitled."

"Let your cruel ambition then be gratified, and at the same time punished! Yes, notwithstanding the horror with which you inspire me! from pity, from respect for the awful misfortunes of my offspring, I should have legitimatised the birth of our daughter by a marriage, although determined to live for ever separated from you, in order that her situation might in future be as elevated and brilliant as it had been miserable and degraded in the past."

"I was not, then, deceived. But woe, woe to me! it is now too late!"

"Oh! I know it. It is not the death of your daughter which you lament; it is the loss of that rank which you have pursued with such inflexible perseverance. Let those infamous regrets be your final punishment."

"The final! for I cannot survive it."

"But before you die, you shall learn to what an existence your unnatural abandonment of your daughter condemned her."

"Poor child! very miserable, doubtless."

"Do you remember," said Rodolph, with fearful composure, "do you remember that evening, when you and your brother followed me to that den of the City?"

"I do remember! but why that question?—your look chills me."

"While going to that haunt, did you not observe in the corners of those streets, miserable creatures who—— But I dare not speak it," said Rodolph, hiding his face in his hands; "my own words inspire me with horror!"

"They inspire me with horror, also! What remains to be told?"

"You have seen them," said Rodolph, with extraordinary effort; "you have seen those females—the shame of their sex. Well! among them, did you not observe a young girl of sixteen, beautiful—yes, beautiful as angels are painted!—a poor child, who, in the midst of the degradation in which, for several weeks, she had been plunged, preserved still, a countenance so virginal, so innocent, so pure, that the thieves and murderers, who treated her with familiarity, madam, had given her the name of *Fleur-de-Marie*. Did you notice that young girl, affectionate mother? tell me!"

"No, I did not notice her," said Sarah, almost unwittingly oppressed with a vague terror.

"Truly!" exclaimed Rodolph, with a sardonic expression, "it is very strange. I noticed her, and I will tell you the occasion. Listen to me. Upon one of those expeditions to which I have already alluded, and which, then, had a complex purpose, I found myself in the City, not far from that haunt to which you followed me. A man was beating one of those unfortunate creatures; I protected her against her brutal oppressor. Do you imagine who that creature was? tell me, kind and devoted mother! tell me! Can you not imagine?"

"No, I cannot imagine. Oh! leave me! leave me!"

"That unfortunate female was Fleur-de-Marie!"

"Great God!"

"And do you not imagine who Fleur-de-Marie was, irreproachable mother?"

"Kill me! kill me at once!"

"It was Goualeuse! it was your daughter!" exclaimed Rodolph, with a frightful burst of grief and indignation. "Yes, that unfortunate female, whom I rescued from the hands of a galley-slave, was my own child!—the daughter of Rodolph of Gerolstein! Oh! there was in that encounter with my child, whom I saved, without knowing that my blood swelled in her veins, something fatal, something providential—a recompense to the man who seeks to succour his brethren—a punishment for the parricide!"

"I die accursed and damned!" murmured Sarah, falling back in her arm-chair, and burying her face in her hands.

"When I rescued her from the ill-treatment with which she was threatened," continued Rodolph, hardly suppressing his feelings, and unable to restrain the sobs which smothered his voice, "struck by the uncommon sweetness of her accent, the angel-like expression of her features, it was impossible for me to withhold my interest from her; then, with what deep emotion I listened to her touching recital of a life of abandoned misery and guilt!—for, madam, the life you condemned your daughter to lead, passes beyond the most frightful visions of your imagination! Yes, yes; you must be informed of the tortures of your child! While, surrounded by opulence, you were dreaming of a crown, your almost infant daughter, only protected from the air by the rags which scarcely covered her nakedness, was a beggar in the streets, pinched with cold, almost famished with hunger. During the winter nights, she was shivering on a handful of straw, in a corner of a garret; and, when that horrible nurse was fatigued with beating *our* child, she drew upon her imagination for new tortures! Can you conceive the torment which she devised? She pulled out our daughter's teeth!"

"Would to heaven I could die! I cannot endure this agony!"

"Hear me again! Escaping finally from the hands of Chouette, wandering, without food and shelter, at the tender age of eight years, she was arrested as a vagrant, and sent to prison. Ah! that was the happiest period of your daughter's life! Yes, in her jail she praised God that she suffered no longer from cold and hunger, and that she was no longer beaten. It was in prison that she passed the most precious years of a young girl's life; those years during which a tender mother lavishes upon her daughter all that anxiety and affection can dictate; yes, instead of reaching her sixteenth year, encircled in protecting arms, imbued with the holiest counsel, washed with tears, your daughter encountered only the stern glances or the cold indifference of jailors. Thus nursed in infancy, thus educated in childhood, she was finally cast out, into the misery and pollution of a large city. Unfortunate child! abandoned, friendless, with no eye to watch over her, no voice to counsel, no arm to defend, a prey to all the temptations which vice can present. Oh!" exclaimed Rodolph, giving free course to the sobs which choked his utterance, "your heart is marble, your selfishness merciless, your eyes dry! but you, even you, would have wept, in hearing the distressing recital of her tortured infancy, and wretched childhood, from the lips of your daughter! Poor child! soiled, but never corrupted; chaste even in the midst of that horrible degradation, which seemed to her like a frightful dream; for each word, tone, look, betrayed her instinctive horror of a life to which she was fatally enchained. If you knew what holy instincts her language revealed—what kindness, what charity! yes, for it was to relieve misfortunes greater than her own, that the poor child expended the last money she possessed, which might have saved her from the abyss of infamy. But the day finally came—the day of distress which could be no longer borne—when, without food, without shelter, harpies met her, feeble, hungry, and drowned her senses in brandy!" Rodolph could not finish the recital. A distressing cry burst from his heart as he exclaimed: "Alas! alas! she was my daughter!—my only daughter!"

"A curse will rest upon me!" groaned Sarah, burying her face in her hands, as if she feared to see the light.

"Yes, curses on you! for your inhuman abandonment of your child produced these accumulated horrors! Curses on you! for when, rescuing her from that infamy, I placed her in a peaceful retreat, you caused her to be torn from it by the infamous accomplices of your guilt. Curses upon you! for your act placed her again in the power of that wretch Ferrand." At that name, Rodolph suddenly stopped. He started, as if for the first time he had pronounced that name: it was the first time that he had pronounced it, since he knew that his daughter was that monster's victim. The features of the prince now assumed a frightful expression of rage and hatred. Silent and motionless, he remained as if overwhelmed by the thought that the murderer of his child was still living.

Sarah, in spite of her increasing weakness, and the agitation which the conversation of Rodolph naturally produced, was confounded by the threatening expression of his countenance, and trembled for herself. "Alas! what ails you?" she exclaimed, in a tremulous voice. "Have I not suffered enough already? Just heaven!"

"No! it is not enough—not enough!" said Rodolph, speaking to himself, and responding to his own thoughts. "I have never before felt what I now feel: such a thirst for vengeance—such a yearning for blood—such cool and collected rage! When I did not know that one of that monster's victims was my own child, I said to myself: 'The death of that man would be unavailing; whereas, his life would be useful, if to redeem it he would accept the conditions imposed. To condemn him to beggary for the purpose of expiating his crimes, appears to me to be just.' A life without gold—a life without the means of gratifying his frenzied sensuality, would have been to him a long and distressing torture. But it is my daughter, whom as a child he delivered to all the torments of misery—as a young girl, to all the horrors of infamy!" exclaimed Rodolph, becoming more and more excited; "it is my daughter, whom finally he murdered! His blood must atone for the crime!" And the prince rushed for the door.

"Where are you going? Do not abandon me!" exclaimed Sarah, rising partially, and stretching towards Rodolph her supplicating hands; "do not leave me alone! I am dying!"

"Alone? no, no! the spectre of your daughter will attend you, whose death you have caused!"

Sarah, horror-stricken, fell upon her knees,

uttering a shriek of fear, as if a denizen of the grave stood before her. "Mercy! I pray for mercy! I am dying!"

"Die then, accursed one!" exclaimed Rodolph, in a frenzied tone. "Now, now I must have the life of your accomplice! for it is you who delivered your daughter to her executioner!" And Rodolph entered his carriage, and ordered himself to be driven to the house of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER IX.

"FURENS AMORIS."

NIGHT had approached, while Rodolph was on his way to the house of the notary.

The pavilion occupied by the wretch who was expiating his crimes, is plunged in darkness. The wind is moaning; the rain falls in torrents. The rain also fell, the wind also howled, when his avenging fury, having excited to frenzy the passions of her victim, had fled from him for ever.

Stretched upon a couch, in his chamber, where the light of a lamp glimmers, Jacques Ferrand is dressed in black; one of the sleeves of his shirt is rolled up, and spotted with blood; a bandage upon his arm announces that he has recently been bled by Polidori.

The physician, standing by the bed, and with one hand leaned upon it, surveys with awakened curiosity the features of his accomplice. Nothing that the fancy can conceive, could be more hideously frightful than the face of the notary, while he lies plunged in that comatose state, which usually precedes the violent crisis of a disease. Cold sweat rolled from his countenance of livid paleness, indicating plainly that he has reached the last stages of this consuming atrophy. His closed eyelids are so swollen, and inflamed with blood, that they appear like two balls of red, in that face of cadaverous hue.

"Another paroxysm as violent as the last, will end him," said Polidori, in a low voice. "Arœteus* says, that the majority of those attacked by this strange and frightful disease, usually perish on the seventh day, and it is now six days since the infernal Creole kindled the unquenchable fire which devours this man." After a few moments of thoughtful silence, Polidori retired from the bed, and slowly paced the room. "Just now," added he, stopping, "during this last attack, which nearly terminated the torments of Jacques, I thought myself under the illusions of a dream, in hearing him describe, one by one, and in an oppressed voice, the monstrous hallucinations which dance through his brain. What a terrible disease! By turns, it subjects each organ to phenomena, which disconcert science and frighten nature. A moment since, the *hearing* of Jacques was so acutely and painfully sensitive, that, although I spoke to him in as low a voice as I could, my words struck his morbid tympanum with such violence, that he fancied, he told me, his head was a bell, and that an enormous brazen clapper, set in motion by the least sound, swung in his head, from one temple to the other, with deafening noise and distressing shocks."

Polidori again stood pensive before the bed of Jacques Ferrand, near which he had now once more approached. The tempest roared without, and it soon burst forth with redoubled fury, in hissing and violent gusts of wind and rain, which shook every window of that dilapidated house. Notwithstanding the atrocious wickedness of Polidori, he was inclined to superstition; dark presentiments arose in his mind; he felt a restlessness which cannot be described; the roaring of the hurricane, which alone broke the ominous silence of the night, inspired him with fears against which he struggled in vain. To banish from his mind these gloomy thoughts, he again studied the features of his accomplice. "Now," said he, leaning over him, "the blood is rushing to his eyelids; one would almost say that his boiling blood concentrates there. The organ of *sight* will soon, as the organ of hearing did recently, offer, in its turn, some extraordinary phenomena. What torments he endures! how long they last, and how varied they are! When nature attempts to be cruel," he added, with a bitter smile, "and to play the part of a torturer, it passes beyond the most frightful inventions of man. Thus, in his disease, produced by an erotic frenzy, it subjects every sense to inconceivable and superhuman agony; it develops the sensibility of each organ to a most incomprehensible degree, so that the intensity of the suffering is also incomprehensible." After having studied attentively, for some time, the features of Jacques Ferrand, the doctor shuddered with disgust, started back, and said: "What a frightful mask! those nervous quiverings, that twitching and leaping of the muscles, make his countenance hideous!"

The tempest still increased in violence.

"What a storm!" said Polidori, seating himself in a chair, and leaning his brow upon his hands; "what a night! what a night! Nothing could be more unfavourable to the situation of Jacques." After a long silence, he continued: "I do not know whether the prince, informed of the infernal blandishments of Cecily, and of Jacques's inflammable susceptibility, foresaw, that in a man of his fiery temperament, and vigorous *physique*, the ardour of a burning and ungrateful passion, combined with a kind of avaricious rage, would develop this frightful nervous disease, of which Jacques is a victim. From those causes it is a necessary and natural consequence. Oh, yes!" said he, rising suddenly, as if he had been frightened by the thought; "yes, the prince, undoubtedly, foresaw this result. His rare and varied knowledge is not ignorant of any science; his profound glance seizes both cause and effect. Merciless in his justice, he based the punishment of Jacques upon logical deductions concerning the effects of a brutal passion, exasperated to madness."

After a long pause, Polidori continued: "When I think of the past, when I think of the projects which, together with Sarah, I founded upon the youth of the prince—by what a strange sequence of events, by what successive steps of degradation, have I fallen into the criminal subjection in which I now live!—I, who supposed I could enervate that prince, and make him the docile instrument of an elevation of which I had dreamed. From preceptor, I expected to become minister; and in spite of my knowledge and my intellect, from step to step, from crime to crime, I have finally reached the lowest depths of infamy. I am now here, the jailor of my accomplice;" and Polidori plunged in gloomy reflection, which again brought Rodolph to his mind. "I

* "*Nam plerumque in septimo die hominem consumit.*"—ARŒTEUS. See also, a translation of Baldassar, Cas. Med. lib. iii.—"*Salacitas nitro curata.*" See likewise, the wonderful pages of Ambrose Paré, on *satyriasis*, "that strange and frightful disease, which resembles so much," says he, "a visitation of God."

fear and hate the prince," said he; "but I am forced to bow in subjection to that mind—to that mighty will which passes beyond all limits, and resorts to resources and combinations which were unknown before. What a strange contrast in the man, charitable enough to devise the Bank for Unemployed Labourers, and ferocious enough to preserve Jacques Ferrand from death, in order that he might surrender him to all the vengeful furies of lust."

"Nothing, however, could be more orthodox, or better sustained by precedent," continued he, with a bitter sneer. "Among the paintings which Michael Angelo executed of the seven capital sins, in his picture of the 'Last Judgment,' in the Chapel Sixtine, I saw the terrible punishment which he inflicts on lust.* But the hideous and convulsive faces of those damned in the flesh, who were twisting in agony under the poisonous sting of enraged serpents, are less frightful to my mind than the face of Jacques Ferrand during his last fit. He frightened me!" And Polidori shuddered as if the fearful vision was still before his eyes.

"Oh, yes!" he continued, with a frightened expression; "the prince is merciless. It would have been a thousand times better for Ferrand to have placed his head upon the scaffold; better the fire, the wheel, the molten lead which burns the vitals, than the torments which this wretch endures. Seeing him suffer so much, I was alarmed for my own fate. What has he in reserve for me, the accomplice of Jacques? It will not satisfy the prince, to condemn me merely to be his jailor; he did not save me from the scaffold, to allow me to live in freedom. Perhaps an endless dungeon awaits me in Germany—that would be preferable to death. I could do nought but surrender myself blindly to his discretion. It was my only chance of escape. At times, in spite of his promise, I am assailed by fear. Will they deliver me to the executioner, if Jacques dies? To erect the scaffold for me while he lives, would be to erect it also for him, my accomplice. But if he dies? And yet I know that the word of the prince is sacred. But I, who have so often violated divine and human laws, could I invoke his sworn promise? No matter; in the same manner that it was for my interest that Jacques should not escape, it will be also my interest to lengthen his days; but the symptoms of his disorder become more aggravated every instant; a miracle, almost, would be required to save him. What shall I do?"

At this moment, the tempest had reached its height; a chimney, blown down by the violence of the wind, fell upon the roof, and dashed into the court with the noise of thunder.

Jacques Ferrand, aroused suddenly from his apathy, moved upon his bed. Polidori felt more and more under the influence of the vague terror which overpowered him.

"It is foolish to give way to presentiments," said he; "but this night appears to me to forbode calamity."

A distressing groan from the notary now attracted Polidori's attention. "His torpor is passing away," said the physician to himself; "perhaps he will pass into another stage of the disease."

"Polidori! Polidori!" murmured Jacques Ferrand, stretched upon his back, and with his eyes closed; "what is that noise?"

"A chimney has fallen," replied Polidori, in a low voice, fearing to strike too vividly the excited ear of his accomplice; "an awful storm shakes the house to its foundation; the night is horrible! horrible!"

The notary did not hear his companion, and continued, turning partly his head: "Polidori! Polidori! You are not here then?"

"Yes, yes, I am here!" said Polidori, in a louder tone; "but I replied to you softly, through fear of increasing the pain of your excited organ of sound, by too loud a tone."

"No; your voice now reaches my ear without producing the awful distress it did before; for, it seemed to me, at the least sound, that the thunder was bursting into my brain; and yet, in the midst of that roar, of those nameless tortures, I distinguished the passionate voice of Cecily calling me."

"Is that infernal woman ever present? You must drive those thoughts from your mind, or they will kill you."

"Those thoughts are my life, and, like it, resist my suffering."

"But, maniac that you are, those are thoughts which produce these tortures. Your sickness is nothing but your sensual frenzy, inflamed to its highest exasperation. I beseech you to expel these lascivious images, or you will perish."

"Drive away those images!" exclaimed the distempered wretch; "never, never! I fear even that my mind will exhaust itself in summoning them. But, by hell! it shall not exhaust itself! The more the burning image dances through my brain, the more it resembles reality. As soon as pain leaves me a moment of repose—as soon as I can connect two ideas—Cecily, the demon of my caresses and my curses, rushes to my sight."

"What unconquerable fury! he frightens me!"

"Look, now!" said the notary, in a trembling voice, and with his eyes rivetted upon the obscurity of the alcove; "I already see her white and indistinct form! There—there!" and he pointed his hairy and fleshless finger in the direction of the vision.

"Hush, miserable wretch!"

"Ha, ha, ha! there she is!"

"Jacques, it is death—death!"

"Ha! I see her!" said the victim, with his teeth close together, without answering Polidori.

"There, there she is, beautiful as life! How her black locks float in disorder upon her shoulders, and her beautiful teeth, dazzling between her parted lips!—her lips so rosy and so moist! Her large eyes sparkle and languish in turn. Cecily! Cecily!" he added, in unrestrained excitement, "I adore you!"

"Jacques, hear me—hear me!"

"Welcome, damnation! if my eyes could be cheered with this endless vision!"

"Jacques!" exclaimed Polidori, alarmed, "do not gaze upon those visions."

"It is not a vision!"

"Beware! You heard but a moment since, the enticing strains which she sang, and your ear was immediately seized with distressing pain. Beware—beware! I say."

"Leave me—leave me!" exclaimed the notary,

* "Carried away by his subject, his imagination excited by eight years of continual meditation upon a day so horrible to a believer, Michael Angelo, elevated to the dignity of a preacher, and thinking of nothing but his salvation, wished to punish, in the most striking manner, the vice which was then most current. The horror of that punishment seems to me to approach the sublime."—STENDHALD'S *Histories of Paintings in Italy*, p. 354.

with impatient anger. "What is the use of ears, unless to hear her? of sight, unless to see her?"

"But tortures will follow, miserable wretch!"

"I can brave tortures for this vision—I have braved death for the reality! What is the difference? Lovely, rapturous Cecily! you know, monster, that you are charming! Why do you practise those fascinations upon me?—those coquettish arts, now inviting, now repulsive, which consume me? Hateful fury! do you wish to kill me? Cease, cease! or I will strangle you!" exclaimed the notary, raving.

"But you will kill yourself, miserable man!" exclaimed Polidori, shaking the notary roughly, to recall him from his trance.

Futile efforts! Jacques continued, in a more vehement and frantic strain: "Beloved queen! demon of excitement!——"

The notary could not finish; he uttered a shrill cry of pain, and fell back.

"What ails you?" exclaimed Polidori, in astonishment.

"Extinguish that lamp! its flame is too bright to be endured—it dazzles my eyes!"

"What!" said Polidori, more and more surprised; "the lamp is covered with a shade, and its light is remarkably dim."

"I tell you, that the light is increasing; behold! behold! it is intolerable!" added Jacques Ferrand, closing his eyes with an expression of extreme pain.

"You are mad! the room is hardly lighted, I tell you. I have just diminished the flame; open your eyes, and you will see."

"Open my eyes! the flood of fire with which the room is filled, would blind me; here! there! everywhere! I see sparks of fire, volumes of flame! A furnace here! there! everywhere!" exclaimed the notary, raising himself upon the bed; and uttering a fresh shriek of pain, he covered his eyes with his hands. "I am blind! I am blind! this vivid light pierces my closed eyelids! it burns! it consumes me! My hands protect slightly my vision; but extinguish the light! it spouts forth an infernal fire!"

"There can be no longer any doubt that his sight is now struck with that excruciating sensibility with which his hearing was recently affected; another paroxysm of this disorder, and he is dead. To bleed again in his present condition would be fatal: he is lost."

A new, sharp, and piercing cry from the suffering mortal, echoed through the deserted house.

"Executioner, put out the light! its burning flame penetrates my hands and eyelids! both are transparent! I see the blood circulating through my veins; it is useless to close my eyelids, or to protect my vision with my hands—this penetrating lava reaches the pupil of my eye! Ah! ah! what agony! Red-hot spikes of iron are thrust into the sockets of my eyes! Help! help!" he exclaimed, writhing on his bed in frightful convulsions of distress.

Polidori, frightened by the violence of this new attack, suddenly extinguished the lamp, and both remained together in the profound darkness of that chamber. At this moment, the noise of a carriage was heard drawing up to the door of the mansion.

When darkness had invaded the room where Polidori and the notary now were, the acute anguish of the latter gradually ceased.

"Why did you so long delay extinguishing the light?" said Jacques Ferrand. "Was it to make me endure the torments of the damned? How much I have suffered! what tortures have visited me!"

"Do you suffer less now?"

"I still feel a violent irritation; but it is ease, comfort, compared with the pain I have just experienced."

"I told you that such would be the result; as soon as the recollection of that woman excites one of your senses, that sense will be struck with those phenomena which baffle all science, and which believers might regard as a visitation of God."

"Don't speak to me of God!" exclaimed the monster, gnashing his teeth.

"I merely spoke to you of God, for memory's sake; but since you are so much attached to life, however miserable it may be, remember, I repeat to you, that you will be carried away during one of these terrible paroxysms, if you provoke them again."

"I am attached to life, because the recollection of Cecily constitutes my life."

"But that memory kills, exhausts, consumes you."

"I neither can nor wish to abstract my mind from it. I am incorporated with Cecily, like the blood to the body. That man has extorted from me all my fortune; but he could not take from me the imperishable image of that enchantress! That image is mine; at all hours it is by my side as a slave. She says what I wish! she looks at me as I wish! she adores me as I wish!" exclaimed the notary, in a new fit of frenzy.

"Jacques, restrain your excitement; remember the crisis you have just passed."

The notary did not see his accomplice, who foresaw some new hallucination. Jacques Ferrand actually burst forth in a peal of convulsive and sardonic laughter: "Can they take Cecily from me? They do not know that, by concentrating all the faculties on one object, the mind can attain to the unseen—the inviaible; so that, presently, I shall ascend to the room of Cecily, which I have not dared approach since her departure. Yes; seeing, touching the clothes which belonged to her, the glass before which she dressed, will insure to me her presence there; and in fixing my eyes earnestly upon that glass, I soon shall see her form appear, and it will be no illusion, no vision; it will be her bodily form! Ha! ha! I shall find her there, as the sculptor finds the statue in the marble block. But, by all the pains of hell with which I am burning, she shall not be a pale, cold, forbidding Galatea!"

"Where are you going?" exclaimed Polidori, upon hearing Jacques rise; for the deepest darkness reigned in the apartment.

"I am going after Cecily."

"You shall not go; the sight of that room would kill you."

"Cecily is waiting for me above."

"You shall not go; I will hold you," said Polidori, seizing the notary by the arm. Jacques, who had reached the last degree of exhaustion, could not struggle against his accomplice, who held him with a vigorous grasp.

"Do you wish to prevent me from seeing Cecily?"

"Yes; and besides, there is a lighted lamp in the adjoining room, and you are well aware of the effect the light produced upon your vision, a moment since."

"Cecily is up-stairs, and waiting for me. I would burst through a burning furnace to see

her! Leave me! She told me that I was her old tiger; beware! my claws are sharp!"

"You shall not leave the room. I would sooner bind you to the bed as a furious maniac."

"Polidori, hear me. I am not mad, I am in possession of every sense; I know very well that Cecily is not actually in her chamber, but the phantoms of my fancy are as consoling to me as realities."

"Silence!" exclaimed Polidori, suddenly, inclining his ear; "I thought I heard, a moment since, a carriage stop at the door; I was not mistaken, I hear, now, voices in the court."

"You wish to divert my thoughts; but your stratagem is seen through."

"I now hear some one speaking; I think that I recognise the voice."

"You wish to deceive me," said Jacques Ferrand, interrupting Polidori; "I will not be your dupe."

"Listen, miserable wretch! do you not hear?"

"Release me! Cecily calls me! Do not infuriate me! I warn you, in my turn, to beware! Do you hear me? Beware!"

"You shall not go!"

"Beware!"

"You shall not leave this place; my interest demands it."

"If you dare to prevent me from going to see Cecily, my interest will demand that you shall die. Take it, then!" said the notary, in a stern and sepulchral tone.

A shriek burst from Polidori: "Wretch, you have struck me in the arm; but you are feeble, the wound is slight, and you shall not escape me."

"Thy wound is mortal! 'tis from the poisoned stiletto of Cecily; I wear it in my bosom—the poison is sure! I shall be released! Ha! your grasp loosens! you are a dead man! You should not have stepped between me and Cecily!" exclaimed the notary, groping his way to the door.

"My arm is benumbed," cried Polidori; "a mortal coldness seizes me—my knees falter—my blood is congealed—my head swims. Help! help!" exclaimed the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, concentrating his remaining strength in a final appeal for aid; "help, or I shall die!" And he dropped upon the floor.

The noise of a glass door, forced open with so much violence that panes of glass jingled upon the floor, the sonorous voice of Rodolph, and precipitate footsteps, answered the agonized appeal of Polidori.

Jacques Ferrand, having finally found the lock, opened the door, and rushed into the adjoining apartment, with the murderous weapon in his hand. At the same instant, formidable and threatening as the god of vengeance, the prince entered from the opposite door.

"Monster!" exclaimed Rodolph, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it is my daughter whom you have slain! You will ——"

The prince could not complete the sentence, but started back in affright. Jacques Ferrand was thunderstruck by his words. Throwing away his stiletto, and covering his eyes with his hands, the wretch fell face foremost to the floor, uttering a cry like the wail of the damned. Darkness had suspended the action of his disordered vision; but the horrible phenomena were developed in all their fury when the rays of light glared upon his eyes, and his sight was struck with flames of more intense and glaring effulgence, than if he had been plunged in the disc of the sun. The agony of the man was wretched to behold. He was writhing in convulsions, as if roasted on coals of fire; tearing the floor with his nails, in a paroxysm of anguish, as if he wished to dig for himself a pit where he might escape from the intolerable glare of the flames, which appeared to surround him!

Rodolph, with one attendant and the pastor of the house, who had been compelled to conduct the prince to the door of the room, started back in terror and horror from the dreadful spectacle. In spite of the heart-rending reasons which fired the wrath of Rodolph against the notary, he could scarcely restrain a throb of compassion at the intense torments of the man. He ordered him to be conveyed to a sofa. It was with great difficulty accomplished, for the fear of exposure to the direct action of the lamp, stimulated the notary with unnatural strength; and when the light fell upon his face, a new shriek burst from his tortured senses—a shriek which paralysed Rodolph with terror. After protracted agony, the attack terminated by its own violence. Having reached that limit which, if augmented but one degree, death would ensue, the visual suffering ceased. But, according to the usual symptoms of that disease, a delirious state succeeded; and, suddenly, the limbs of the notary were stiffened as with the masculine contraction of epilepsy. His eyelids, which had been thus far closed, suddenly opened, and instead of avoiding the light, his eyes were fastened upon it; the pupils, fixed and dilated, seemed, like phosphorus, to shine with their own lustre. He was rapt in a sort of ecstatic reverie. His chest and limbs were motionless; his features, alone, were twitched about by nervous convulsions. His hideous face, wrenched and distorted, bore a resemblance to nothing human. It seemed as if his brutal appetite, having first extinguished his reason, had now stamped the lineaments of the brute upon his features.

Having arrived at the mortal period of his delirium, even in this last glimmer of expiring intelligence, the words of Cecily were still uneffaced from his mind; and as his reason stole gradually away, he fancied that he was a tiger. His broken and constrained words depicted the disorder of his brain, and the strange fancies in which his maddened intellect revelled. By degrees, his limbs, which had thus far been stiff and motionless, relaxed, and he fell from the sofa. He struggled to rise and walk; but, deserted by his strength, he was obliged to creep like a serpent, or move himself forward on his hands and knees, going to and fro, chasing round the room the visions of his delirium. Crouching in one of the angles of the room, as in a den, he imagined that he was a tiger. His enraged growling, the furious gnashing of his teeth, the convulsive twitching of the muscles of his face and forehead, his fiery and glaring eye, imparted to the debased child of humanity a certain and indefinite resemblance to the beast of his disordered brain.

"Tiger — tiger — tiger — I am!" said he, in broken and convulsive efforts of utterance, shrinking up into a heap. "Yes, tiger! How much blood stains my cave! how many mangled corpses here!—Goualeuse—the brother of that widow—the child of Louise—these are the carcases!—and my tigress shall have her share."

[Death of Jacques Ferrand.]

Casting a glance upon his bony fingers, the nails of which had grown quite long during his sickness, he added these broken words: "Sharp—cutting claws—an old tiger—but active—vigorous—bold; who will dare to quarrel with me for my tigress? Hark! she calls—she calls!" said he, protruding his monstrous face, and inclining his ear. After a moment's silence, he again groped along the wall, saying: "No; I thought I heard her—but she is not there. But I see her—always—always! There she springs—she roars—yonder! I come—I come!" and Jacques Ferrand dragged himself upon his knees and hands to the centre of the room. Although his strength was exhausted, the convulsive action of his muscles occasionally twitched him forward; and when he was in a state of rest, he would listen attentively. "Where is she? where is she? I approach—but she flies. Ah!—yonder—she is. Wait—wait—bite the sand—utter your plaintive roar—glare open your ferocious eyes! Ha, ha! they become languishing now; they woo—they implore. Cecily—Cecily!—thy old tiger is here!" and, with a final effort, he raised himself upon his knees. But, suddenly throwing himself back with affright, his body supported on his heels, his hair on end, his looks wild, his mouth distorted with terror, his hands stretched forward, he struggled in an agony of fear and rage against some invisible object; speaking unconnected words in a smothered tone: "What a sting!—help!—my arms are broken—I cannot force it from me—sharp teeth—no, no!—not my eyes—help, help!—a black smoke—his black head—fiery eyes—he glares upon me—it is the devil!—he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—to church, holy man!—ever in church. Go, go away!" he exclaimed, making a sign of the cross. "Avaunt!" repeating the sign; and the notary raising him-

self on the floor with one hand, made an attempt with the other to mark upon his brow the sign of salvation. The sweat gushed from his ghastly visage. His eyes began to lose their transparency; they became like dead men's eyes, with no speculation in them. All the symptoms of approaching dissolution manifested themselves. Rodolph and the other witnesses of this scene, remained motionless and silent, as if they were under the impression of a frightful dream.

"Ha!" continued the victim of delirium, still upon the floor, and sustained with one hand; "a black dog—three white hares—the devil! he flies!—he is gone!—a holy man! I pray—do you think no one will know it? No, no! tempter—very sure?—the secret! Well; let those women come!—all! all!—if no one knows it!" and on the hideous countenance of this victim, whose crimes of lust were visited with this fearful retribution, could now be discerned the expiring convulsions of sensual agony. His feet in the grave which his frenzy had opened, and pursued by frightful phantoms, he still invoked licentious images.

"Come on!" continued the notary, in an oppressed voice—"females!—fiends!—the secret! the secret! You approach the holy man!—here they are—three in number—fatal three!—What does this one utter? 'I am Louise Morel!' Yes! yes! I know you! 'I am but a poor girl! see! behold, Jacques!—a forest of black hair unfolded on my shoulders—you will find my face beautiful—there! there!—take it!—look at it!' What does she give me? Her head!—cut off!—by the hangman!—a dead head! It stares at me!—that dead head speaks to me!—its blue lips move: *Come! come! come!* like Cecily. No! I will not! I will not! Demon, avaunt! And this other woman—beautiful! beautiful! 'I am the duchess!—Jacques! My goddess form!—my bold look!—my smile—come! come! Yes, I come!—but wait!' And this one who turns her face—Cecily! Cecily! 'Yes, Jacques! I am Cecily!—behold three graces! Louise, the duchess, and me!—humble beauty!—patrician beauty!—wild and tropical beauty! and hell with us! Come! come! come!'

"Hell with you!" exclaimed the maniac, raising himself with an expiring effort to seize the impalpable phantoms of his diseased mind. This last convulsive struggle was followed by mortal throes; he instantly fell back, stiff and inanimate; his eyes seemed to start from their sockets, horrid spasms distorted his features, as the galvanic battery does the faces of the dead; bloody foam oozed from his lips; his voice hissed and gasped like that of a man in the hydrophobia; for in its last paroxysm this awful disease, this retributive punishment of lust, exhibits the same symptoms as that dreaded disorder. The monster spirit passed away in the midst of a final vision, which faded upon his dying senses. He stammered these words: "Dark night—dark ghosts—brazen skeletons entwine red-hot arms and burning fingers! My flesh smokes—my marrow is on fire! Obstinate ghosts! No, no! Cecily!—fire!—Cecily!"

Such were the last words of Jacques Ferrand. Rodolph left the room in terror.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOSPITAL.

The reader will remember that Fleur-de-Marie, rescued by Louve, had been conveyed to the house of Dr. Griffon, not far from the Island of the Ravageur. He was one of the physicians of a public hospital,* to which we will now accompany him.

The learned doctor, who had obtained, by distinguished patronage, a situation in that hospital, regarded his halls as a theatre of experiment, where he tested that mode of treatment upon his poor inmates which he afterwards applied to his rich patients; for he never would hazard upon those of the higher classes who employed him, a system of cure, until he had frequently experimented, in regard to its safety, upon "*anima vili*," as he said himself, with that professional barbarity peculiar to the healing art, and peculiar to the habit and power of exercising, without fear and without control, upon a creature of God, all the capricious contrivances, all the learned fancies of an inventive mind. For instance, the doctor wished to assure himself of the effect of some new and doubtful medicinal treatment, in order to guide himself in administering it in future; he would, therefore, take a certain number of patients, and treat these according to this new mode of practice, those by the old method, and abandon the others to the restorative power of nature; after which he would draw up an account of those who survived. Such experiments are human sacrifices on the altar of science. A thought of its inhumanity never occurred to Dr. Griffon's mind. In the eyes of that master of science, the patients in his hospital were only materials for study and experiments. And if, from these experiments, some medical fact was thoroughly established, or some new discovery made, the doctor was as triumphant as a conqueror after a victory which has cost the lives of thousands. Homœopathy, at the time it was first promulgated, had found no more unyielding adversary than Dr. Griffon. He regarded that system of cure as absurd, unscientific, and homicidal. Strong in his convictions, and anxious to drive the homœopathists from the field, with chivalrous generosity he offered to abandon to them a certain number of patients, upon whom they might practise their favourite system according to their best judgment. But he affirmed beforehand, with perfect confidence, that the result would confirm his prediction, that out of twenty patients treated in that manner, five only would survive. The homœopathists refused the proposition, to the great chagrin of Dr. Griffon, who regarded this as a fine opportunity of proving, by figures, the vanity of homœopathic pretensions. The doctor would have been amazed, if he had been told, respecting this free and absolute disposition of his patients: "Such an experiment would make us sigh for those barbarous epochs, when those sentenced to death were condemned to endure certain surgical operations recently discovered, but which no one had yet the courage to apply. If the operation succeeded, the condemned

* The name which I have the honour to bear, and which my father, grandfather, granduncle, and great-grandfather—one of the most learned men of the seventeenth century—have rendered celebrated by great works on theoretical and practical medicine, would forbid me from any attack, or hasty reflection concerning physicians; even though the gravity of the subject upon which I treat, and the just and deserved celebrity of the French Medical School, did not prevent me. In the creation of Dr. Griffon, I have only wished to personify one of those, otherwise respectable, but who allow themselves sometimes to be carried away by the ardour of the art; and led to make experiments, which are a serious abuse of medical power (if I may express myself in this manner), forgetting that there is something more sacred than science—humanity.

criminal was pardoned. Compared with what you propose, sir, such barbarity was charitable; they gave a chance of life to a wretch destined for the scaffold, and they tested an experiment which might be serviceable to the lives of others. But to try your adventurous systems upon poor artisans, whose only refuge is the hospital, when attacked by disease — to try a treatment, perhaps fatal, upon the poor whom misery delivers, confident and disarmed, into your hands — your hands, their only hope, and for whose lives you are answerable only to God —do you not know, sir, that such conduct would be to carry your love of science to inhumanity and cruelty? The poor classes already fill our workshops, our fields, and our armies; they know nothing in life but poverty and privation; and when, at the termination of fatigue and suffering, they fall down half-dead and attenuated, sickness itself does not protect them from a last and sacrilegious abuse. I appeal to your heart, sir, is not such conduct cruel and iniquitous?"

Alas! Dr. Griffon might have been touched by such language, but he would not have been convinced. Man is constituted in this manner: the captain looks upon his soldiers as mere instruments, in that bloody game called a battle; and it is because man is thus made, that society should defend those who are exposed to the direct action of human necessities.

The character of Dr. Griffon, once admitted to be a true delineation, the inmates of his hospital had no guarantee, no resource whatever, against the scientific barbarity of his experiments; for there exists a great deficiency in the organization of public hospitals: we will point it out here, with the hope that we shall be understood.

The military hospitals are daily visited by a superior officer, who is charged with hearing the complaints of the sick soldiers, and to relieve their grievances, if he finds them reasonable. This surveillance, bringing a power entirely distinct from the health-service, to watch over its administration, is excellent, and has always produced the best results; and establishments can seldom be found, which are better managed than military hospitals. The soldiers receive the kindest attention, and we might almost say, that they are treated with respectful commiseration.

Why should not a surveillance, analogous to that of the military, be practised in the public hospitals, by men entirely independent of the government of the hospital, and the health-service? by a committee selected, perhaps, from the mayors, or their aids—among all those, in short, who have any office in the corporation of Paris — offices which are always eagerly solicited. The complaints of the poor, if they were well founded, would meet with an impartial tribunal; such a tribunal is, however, entirely wanting now, for there exists no system of checks, and counter-control, in the service of the hospitals, which appears to us to be a serious evil.

When the doors of Dr. Griffon's halls were once closed upon a patient, the latter belonged, body and soul, to science; no friendly or disinterested ear could listen to his complaints. He was plainly told that, being admitted through charity, he constituted one of the experimental instruments of the doctor, and that his disease was to serve as a subject of study, observation, analysis, or instruction, to the pupils who followed constantly in the train of the chief physician. The subject was frequently obliged to answer questions, which were often of the most painful character, not only to the ears of the physician, who is invested with a sort of sacerdotal character, and has a right to know everything; but to answer, in a loud voice, before an inquisitive and curious crowd, in that pandemonium of science—old or young, matron or maid, were obliged to forget all feeling of delicacy and shame, and to make the most confidential revelation, and to submit to the most repugnant bodily disclosures, before a large assembly. These cruel formalities almost universally aggravated the disease. Such conduct is neither humane nor just. It is because the poor enter the hospital, in the sacred and holy name of charity, that they should be treated with compassion and respect; for there is a certain dignity about misfortune.

When the reader peruses the lines which follow, he will see the reason of these preliminary reflections.

Nothing is more heart-rending than the nocturnal aspect of the vast hall of the hospital into which we shall now introduce the reader. Along its high and gloomy walls, pierced here and there with windows barred like those of prisons, are extended parallel rows of beds, dimly lighted by the sepulchral glare of a lamp suspended from the ceiling. The atmosphere is so nauseating and corrupt, that the new patient is seldom acclimated without danger. This additional suffering is a sort of initiation fee, which every new-comer is obliged to pay for admission into his gloomy residence. After a few days, a diseased pallor announces that the patient has undergone the influence of that deleterious atmosphere, and that he has become acclimated. The atmosphere of this immense hall is therefore heavy and fœtid. At intervals, the silence of the night is interrupted by plaintive groans, or by profound sighs, drawn from the feverish patient. At other times, silence is only broken by the monotonous and regular ticking of a large clock, which marks the long nights of the sleepless sufferer. One of the extremities of the hall was plunged in darkness; but suddenly, in that part of the room, was heard the movement of precipitate steps; a door was several times opened and closed; a sister of charity, whose dark dress and white hood were distinguished by means of a lamp which she carried, approached one of the last beds of the right range. Some of the patients, suddenly aroused, seated themselves in their beds, listening to the cause of their movement. The folding doorway suddenly opened, and a priest entered, bearing a crucifix, and the two sisters of charity knelt down. By the glimmering of the light, which encircled the bed with a pale aureole, while the other parts of the hall were in the shade, the chaplain of the hospital could be heard pronouncing a few words over the couch of misery, the fading sounds of which were lost in the silence of the night.

Within a quarter of an hour, the priest raised the extremity of the sheet, covered the bed completely with it, and departed from the room. One of the sisters, who was kneeling by its side, arose, drew the curtains, the rings of which creaked along the iron bars, and continued her prayers by the side of her companion; after which, profound silence reigned throughout the hall. One of the patients had just died.

Among the females who did not sleep, but had watched the mute ceremonial, were the three persons, whose names have already been mentioned in the course of this narrative: Mademoiselle de Fermont, Lorraine, a poor washerwoman, to whom Goualeuse had formerly given the small sum which remained of her earnings, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of Pique Vinaigre, the story-teller of La Force.

We are acquainted with Mademoiselle de Fermont, and the sister of Pique Vinaigre; as for Lorraine, she was a woman of about twenty years of age, with a mild and regular face, but extremely pale and emaciated. She was in the last stages of consumption, and no hope was entertained for her life. She was herself conscious that she was slowly fading away. The interval between the couches of the two last named individuals was so narrow, that they could converse in a low tone without being overheard by the sisters of charity.

"There is another gone!" said Lorraine, in a low voice, thinking of the deceased, and speaking to herself: "she is beyond the reach of suffering—she is happy!"

"She is happy, if she has no children," added Jeanne.

"Are you not asleep, my neighbour?" said Lorraine to her; "how have you passed your first night here? Last evening, the moment you came in, they put you to bed; and I did not dare to speak to you afterwards, because I heard you sob."

"Oh! yes, I cried much."

"You suffer much, then?"

"Yes, I am inured to suffering; but it was sorrow that drew forth my tears. I finally went to sleep; but the noise of the door woke me up. When the priest came in, and the good sisters of charity knelt down, I saw, plainly, that there was a patient dying, and I breathed a *pater* and an *ave* for her."

"So, also, did I; and, as I am suffering from the same disease, I could not help saying, there is another who suffers no more — she is very happy."

"Yes, if, as I said before, she has no children."

"You have children, then?"

"Three," said the sister of Pique Vinaigre, with a sigh; "and you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long; she was struck with death before she was born, I suffered so much with my illness. I am a washerwoman: I worked as long as I could; but there is an end to everything. When my strength failed me, bread had also failed: they turned me from my lodgings, and I know not what would have become of me, if a poor woman had not taken me with her in a cellar, where she was concealing herself from her husband, who wished to kill her. It was there, on the straw, that my little girl was born; but, by good fortune, that good woman knew a young female, beautiful and charitable as an angel of God. This young girl had a little money; and she took me from my cave, and provided for me a room and furniture, and paid my rent for a month in advance; giving me, besides, a cradle for my child, and forty francs in money, and some clothes. Thanks to her, I recovered my health, and was able to work again."

"Kind little girl! I also have met, by chance, one who is her equal—a young seamstress—very obliging. I had gone to visit my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment's hesitation, "and I met in the parlour the young girl of whom I speak. She overheard me tell my brother that I was not happy. She came to me, very bashful, and offered to be useful to me according to her means—the poor child!"

"That was very kind in her."

"I accepted her offer; she gave me her address, and in two days after that, dear little Mademoiselle Rigolette gave me employment."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Lorraine. "What a singular coincidence!"

"Do you know her?"

"No; but the young girl who was so generous to me, has often mentioned, in my presence, the name of Mademoiselle Rigolette: they were intimate friends."

"Well," said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbours, we should be friends, like our two benefactresses."

"Very willingly; my name is Annette Gertier, surnamed Lorraine—a laundress by trade."

"And my name is Jeanne Duport—a fringe-maker. It is so good in the hospital to meet with some one who is not entirely a stranger to you, especially when one enters here for the first time, and has many sorrows to bear; but I do not wish to think of that. But tell me, Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who was so kind to you?"

"Her name was Goualeuse. It gives me great pain, because I have not seen her for some time. She was as beautiful as the Holy Virgin, with lovely auburn hair, and blue eyes that were so mild. Unfortunately, my poor child died, notwithstanding her aid, when it was two months old. She was so very small, she had nothing but breath:" and Lorraine wiped away a tear.

"And your husband?"

"I am not married. I was washing, by the day, for a rich lady of my village: I had always been irreproachable in my conduct; but her son deceived me, and then ——"

"Oh! yes, I understand."

"When I discovered my situation, I dared not remain in the village. M. Jules—that was the name of the rich lady's son—gave me fifty francs to come to Paris, and said that he would send me twenty francs a month for my support, while I was sick; but since I have left home, I have not received anything from him—not even a letter. I wrote to him once, but he gave me no answer. I did not dare to write again, for I saw very well that he did not wish to hear from me."

"And he it is who has ruined you. Is he rich?"

"His mother is possessed of a large property; but what could I do? I was not there, and he has forgotten me."

"But, at least, he should have remembered his child."

"On the contrary, it was that which enraged him with me; my situation was the cause of his sending me away."

"Poor Lorraine!"

"I regret my child for my own sake, but not for hers, poor little one! she would have been too miserable, and also an orphan, early in life, for I have but a short time to live."

"You should not indulge in such thoughts at your age. Have you been sick long?"

"For about three months. When I had to earn a livelihood for myself and child, I doubled my labour: I returned to my bost too soon:

the winter was very severe; I caught a bad cold. About the same time, I lost my little girl; and while watching with her, I neglected to take care of myself; and sorrow added to that, threw me into a consumption, and I am doomed to die, and so was the actress who has just expired."

"At your age, there is always hope."

"The actress was but two years older than myself, and you have seen the event."

"What! was the person with whom the good sisters are praying, an actress?"

"Indeed she was; and behold her fate. She was once very beautiful, with much money, equipages, and diamonds; but, unfortunately, the small-pox disfigured her. She then became poor; misery followed after it, and there she lies in the hospital, dead! However, she was not proud; on the contrary, she was kind and attentive to every one in the hall. No one has ever called to visit her; and yet, four or five days ago, she told us that she had written to a gentleman whom she had formerly known, in the days of her happiness, and who loved her much. She wrote to him, to request that he would come and claim her body, because she could not bear the thought of dissection."

"And did the gentleman come?"

"No."

"It was very wrong."

"Every moment the poor woman asked for him, saying, always: 'He will come; he will certainly come!' and yet she died without seeing him."

"Her death must have been more painful on that account."

"Oh! yes, indeed; for what she dreaded so much, will happen to her poor body."

"After having been rich and happy, it is a sad fate to die here! As for us, we only change our misery."

"With regard to that," rejoined Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I should be glad if you would render me a service."

"Tell me what it is."

"Should I die, which is very probable, before you leave this, I should wish you to claim my body—I have the same fears as the actress; and I have placed the little money I have left, to pay for my burial."

"Don't have any such idea as that."

"Never mind—will you promise me?"

"Oh! yes; but, thank God! that will not happen."

"But, should it happen, the same misfortune that occurred to the actress, will not, thanks to you, occur to me."

"Poor lady! after having been rich, to end in this way!"

"The actress was not the only one in this ward who has been rich, Madame Jeanne."

"Call me Jeanne, as I call you Lorraine."

"You are very kind."

"Who, then, besides, was rich?"

"A young person, not more than fifteen years old, at most, who was brought in here last evening, before you came in. She was so weak, that they were obliged to carry her. The sister of charity says that this young person and her mother, are people of very respectable family, who have been ruined."

"Is her mother here, too?"

"The mother was so ill, that they were not able to move her. The poor young girl would not leave her; and they took advantage of her having fainted away, to bring her here. It was the proprietor of a miserable lodging-house, who, fearing that she might die there, went before the commissary, and made his declaration."

"And where is she?"

"See! there, in the bed just opposite to you."

"And she is only fifteen years old?"

"Scarcely that."

"The age of my eldest daughter!" said Jeanne, not able to restrain her tears; on thinking of her daughter, she began to weep most bitterly.

"Pardon!" said Lorraine, sorrowfully, "pardon! if I have, unknowingly, given you pain, by speaking of your children—perhaps they are ill, too?"

"Alas! I know not what will become of them, if I remain here more than a week."

"And your husband?"

After a moment's silence, Jeanne resumed, while wiping away her tears: "As we are friends together, Lorraine, I can confide my troubles to you, as you have yours to me; that will relieve me. My husband was a good workman—he got into bad habits, and then abandoned me and my children, after having sold all that we possessed. I set to work again—some good souls assisted me—I began to get a little comfortable again; I brought up my little family in the best way I could, when my husband returned with a wicked woman, who was his mistress, again seized upon all I had, and then I had to begin all over again."

"Poor Jeanne! you could not have helped that?"

"For that, I ought to have obtained a legal separation; but the law costs too much, as my brother says—alas! you see what this dearness of the law produces for us poor people: a few days ago, I went again to see my brother, who gave me three francs, which he had picked up by relating stories to his fellow-prisoners."

"One sees that you have good hearts in your family," said Lorraine, who, from rare delicacy of interest, did not question Jeanne as to the cause of her brother's imprisonment.

"Well! I summoned up my courage. I thought my husband would not come near me for some time, as he had taken all he could. No! I deceived myself!" added the unhappy woman, shuddering; "there was still my daughter to take from me—my poor Catherine!"

"Your daughter?"

"You will see—you will see! Three days ago, I was working with my children around me. My husband came in: I saw, at once, by his look, that he had been drinking. 'I am come to carry away Catherine,' said he. Almost mechanically, I caught hold of my daughter's arm, and asked Duport where he was going to take her. 'That's no concern of yours; she is my daughter; let her pack up her things, and follow me;' At hearing this, my blood boiled within me: for, only think, Lorraine, that wicked woman, who is with my husband! it makes one shudder to think of it—but, nevertheless, it is so—she, for a long time, has urged him to make money of our daughter, who is young and pretty! say, is not she a monster?

"Yes, she must be a real monster."

"'Take away Catherine!' replied I, to Duport, 'never! I well know what your wretched

woman wishes to do with her.' 'Take care!' said my husband, whose lips were already white with passion; 'do not irritate me, or I will knock you down!' Thereupon, he took my daughter by the arm, saying: 'Come, let's be going, Catherine.' My poor girl threw her arms about my neck, burst into tears, and cried out: 'I will stay with my mother!' Hearing this, Duport became furious; he tore my child from me, gave me a violent blow on the chest, which threw me on the ground; and, when I was down—when I was down—but, look you, Lorraine," said the unhappy woman, interrupting her story, "he certainly would not have been so brutal, had he not been drinking—well! he stamped upon me, overloading me with imprecations!"

"Good gracious! what a wicked wretch he must be!"

"My poor children threw themselves at his feet, begging for mercy—Catherine also. He then said to my daughter, swearing most furiously: 'If you do not come with me, I will kill your mother.' I was then vomiting blood; I felt half dead; I could not move; but I cried out to Catherine: 'Let him kill me sooner, but do not follow your father!' 'You will not hold your tongue, then?' said Duport, giving me a dreadful kick, which made me faint away."

"Ah! what misery! what misery!"

"When I came to myself, I found my two little boys crying near me."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" exclaimed the unhappy mother, agonized with grief, and sobbing violently; "yes, gone! My other children told me that her father beat her; threatening, moreover, that he would kill me on the spot; and then—how could it be otherwise?—the poor thing was distracted: she threw herself upon me to embrace me; she kissed her little brothers, crying bitterly; and then my husband dragged her away. Ah! the vile woman was waiting for him on the stairs—I am sure of that."

"And cannot you complain to the commissary of police?"

"At the first moment, I thought only of my grief at finding Catherine gone—but I soon felt violent pains throughout my body. I could not walk. Alas! oh, God! all I had feared had happened. Yes, I had told my brother, that one day my husband would beat me so dreadfully, that I should be obliged to go to the hospital—and then what would become of my poor children! and now I am in the hospital, and I say, what will become of my poor children?"

"There is no justice, then, for poor people!"

"Too dear! too dear for us, as my brother says," continued Jeanne Duport, with bitterness. "The neighbours had been to fetch the commissary—his clerk came to me. It went against me to denounce Duport, but, for my daughter's sake, I did it; only I said, that I had been quarrelling with him, because he wished to take away my daughter, and he had *pushed* me down—that it would be nothing—but that I wished to have Catherine back with me, as I was fearful that the wicked woman with whom my husband lives would corrupt her."

"And what did the clerk say to you?"

"That my husband had the right to take my daughter, not being separated from me; that it would be a misfortune if my daughter turned out badly by following evil counsel, but that those were mere suppositions, and did not suffice to support a complaint against my husband. 'You have only one method,' said the clerk, 'to plead in a civil court—demand a separation—and then the blows your husband has given you, and his conduct with this bad woman, will be in your favour, and he will be compelled to give you back your daughter; without such a proceeding, he has a legal right to keep his daughter with him.' 'But how can I go to law? I have not the means; I have to find food for my children.' 'How can I help it?' said the clerk; 'such is the law.' Yes," rejoined Jeanne, sobbing, "he was right; such is the law: and because it is such, in three months, perhaps, my daughter will be a miserable creature, walking the streets; while, on the other hand, if I had the means of obtaining a separation from my husband, this would not have happened."

"And this will not happen. Your daughter must love you so much——"

"But she is so young. At that tender age, a girl cannot protect herself; and then her terror, unkind treatment, bad advice, bad example, the obstinacy with which they insist on her doing wrong—all these things combined, make me tremble for her. My poor brother had foreseen all this—he—he said to me, that this would be the case. My God! my God! my poor Catherine, so gentle, so affectionate; and I, who wished that she should, this year, renew her first communion!"

"Oh! your troubles are too great—and I who complained of my own fate!" said Lorraine, wiping her eyes. "And your other children?"

"On their account, I did all I could to overcome the pains I suffered, and not to come into the hospital; but my strength failed me. I could not bear up against it. I threw up blood three or four times a day. I have a fever which so oppresses me, that I am no longer in a state to work; but here, at least, I may be cured more speedily, and then I can return to my children, if, before then, they are not dead from hunger, or sent to prison as beggars. While I am shut up here, who can you suppose would attend to them, and feed them?"

"Oh! 'tis terrible! Have you no kind neighbours?"

"They are as poor as I am, and have five children of their own. Two children more would fall heavily upon them. However, they promised to feed them *a little*, for eight days; that is all they can do; and to do this, they must deprive themselves of part of the bread they eat, and they have not too much of it now. I must, then, recover in eight days. Oh, yes! recovered or not, I shall go out of this."

"But, now I think of it, how was it you did not remember that good little workwoman, Mademoiselle Rigolette, whom you met in the prison? She would, most surely, have taken care of them."

"I did think of her; and although the poor little girl may find it difficult to keep herself, I sent a neighbour to her to tell her of the trouble I was in. Unfortunately, she was in the country, where she was going to be married, as the porter of the house in which she lived said."

"Thus, then, in eight days, your poor children—but no, your neighbours will not have the heart to send them away."

"How can they do otherwise? They do not even now, have enough to satisfy their hunger—

and they must take from their own children to give to mine! No, no! I must be cured within eight days. I have already said so to all the doctors who have questioned me since yesterday, but they only laugh at me. It is to the head physician I must apply for that. When will he be here, Lorraine?"

"Hush! I think this is he. You must not speak while he is making his visit," said Lorraine, whispering to Jeanne.

During the conversation of the two women, the day had began to dawn. A tumultuous movement announced the arrival of Doctor Griffon, who soon entered the ward, accompanied by his friend, the Count de Saint-Remy; who, as we have already shown, felt a lively interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, but was far from anticipating that he should find this unfortunate young girl in the hospital.

On entering the ward, the cold and austere features of Doctor Griffon appeared to brighten up; throwing around him a look of satisfaction and authority, he answered, with a protecting nod, the eager welcome given to him by the sisters of charity.

The rough and austere countenance of the old Count de Saint-Remy, bore the impression of a profound melancholy. The ill-success of his endeavours to discover any trace of Mademoiselle de Fermont, the ignominious cowardice of the viscount, who had preferred to live a life of infamy, rather than die, had overwhelmed him with grief.

"Well," said Doctor Griffon, to the count, with a triumphant air, "what think you of my hospital?"

"Truly," replied the count, "I know not why I yielded to your wish—nothing can be more heart-rending than the sight of these rooms, filled with invalids: since I came in here, my heart feels cruelly oppressed."

"Bah! bah! in a quarter of an hour, you will think nothing of it. You, who are a philosopher, will find ample food for observation; and then, besides, it is disgraceful that you, one of my oldest friends, should not have seen this theatre of my fame, of my labours; and that you should not have seen me labouring in my vocation. My pride is my profession. Is this a fault?"

"No, certainly; and after your great exertions for Fleur-de-Marie, whom you saved, I could not refuse you anything. Poor child! what a touching charm her features still retain, notwithstanding her cruel illness!"

"She furnished me a very curious medical fact—I am quite enchanted with her. By-the-by, how has she passed the night? did you see her this morning, before leaving Asnières?"

"No; but Louve, who watches over her with unparalleled care, told me that she had slept well. Could we permit her to write to-day?"

After a moment's hesitation, the doctor replied: "Yes, so long as the *subject* was not perfectly recovered, I feared the most trifling emotion, the slightest exertion of the mind might be injurious; but now, I do not see that there will be any objection to her writing. She can, at least, inform the persons who interested themselves about her, of her position, without doubt. By-the-by, have you learnt anything new as to the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing," said M. de Saint-Remy, sighing; "my incessant endeavours have had no favourable result. My only hope is in the Marquise d'Harville, who, as I am told, also takes a lively interest in these unfortunate ladies—perhaps she may have some information which may give me some trace of them. I called at her house, three days ago, and was informed she was expected every moment. I wrote to her on the subject, begging her to answer me as soon as possible."

During the conversation of M. de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon, several groups had formed around the centre of the ward. Upon the table was a register, in which the students attached to the hospital, and who were recognised by their long white aprons, signed, one by one, the *attendance roll;* a great number of studious and eager pupils successively arrived at the hospital, to augment the scientific train of Doctor Griffon, who, having arrived some minutes sooner than his usual hour of visiting, waited for it to strike.

"You see, my dear De Saint-Remy, that my staff is tolerably numerous," said Doctor Griffon, proudly, pointing to the crowd who had come to attend his practical instructions.

"And these young men attend you at the bed of every invalid?"

"That is all they come for."

"But all these beds are occupied by women."

"Well?"

"The presence of so many men must by very painful to them."

"Pshaw! an invalid has no sex."

"In your eyes, perhaps; but in their own—their modesty, their shame."

"You must leave these fine feelings at the door, my dear Alceste. Here we commence, upon the living subject, experiments and studies which we conclude, in the dissecting-room, upon the dead body."

"Stay, Doctor; you are the best and worthiest of men. I owe my life to you; I acknowledge your excellent qualities, but habit and the love of your profession make you regard certain questions in a way that shocks one. I leave you," said M. de Saint-Remy, moving away to leave the ward.

"What childishness!" said the doctor, retaining him.

"No, no; there are things which make me feel indignant, and which wound my heart; I foresee, that to attend you during your visit, will be a torment to me. I will not go away, if you don't wish it; but I will wait for you here, near this table."

"What a man you are, with your scruples! but I will not let you off. I admit that it would be tedious to you to go from bed to bed: stop where you are then—I will call you to witness two or three cases, which are rather singular."

"Well, be it so, since you insist upon it. That will be enough for me, and besides ——"

The clock struck half-past seven. "Come, gentlemen," said Doctor Griffon; and he commenced his visit, followed by a numerous auditory.

On approaching the first bed on the right-hand side, of which the curtains were closed, the sister said to the doctor: "Number One died this morning, sir, at half-past four."

"So late as that? It astonishes me! Yesterday morning, I did not think she would have lived out the day."

"No, sir."

"So much the better—'tis a fine subject; I shall now make one man happy:" and then, addressing himself to one of the pupils in his suite: "My dear Dunoyer, you have long wished for a subject; you are the first upon my list—I will give you this one."

"Oh, sir, what kindness!"

"I should be glad more frequently to reward your zeal, my dear friend—but mark the subject well—take possession of it; there are so many fine young fellows after such a quarry!" And the doctor passed on.

The pupil, with the aid of a scalpel, very delicately traced an incision upon the arm of the dead actress, of the letters "F.D."—Francis Dunoyer, to take possession of it,* as the doctor had told him, and the visit was then continued.

"Lorraine," whispered Jeanne Duport softly to her neighbour, "who are all those people following the doctor?"

"They are pupils and students."

"Oh, heaven! will all those young men be here when the physician comes to question me and look at me?"

"Alas! yes."

"But it is in the chest that I suffer—they won't examine me before all these young men?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so—they will have it so. I cried enough the first time they did so—I was dying with shame. I resisted—they threatened to send me away; I was obliged to make up my mind to it; but it produced such an effect upon me, that I felt worse for it. Only think! almost naked before so many people! it is very painful, I can assure you."

"That the physician should do so, I can comprehend, if it is necessary—and even that is very painful—but why before all these young men?"

"They are studying, and we serve as a lesson to them. We cannot help it—we are here for that—it is upon this condition we are received into the hospital."

"Ah! I understand," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness—"they give us nothing for nothing; but yet, there are occasions when this could not be. Supposing that my poor Catherine, who is only fifteen years of age, should come to the hospital, would they dare, before all these men—oh! no—I think I would rather see her die in my own house!"

"If she came here, she must submit to it, as the rest, as you—as I have done."

"But let us be quiet, Lorraine; if that poor young lady who is opposite to us, were to hear us—she, who they say, was so rich—she who, perhaps, never left her mother before; it will soon be her turn—only think how confused and unhappy she would feel."

"Gracious! but that's true! I tremble for her, even when thinking of it—poor child! Silence, Jeanne," said Lorraine; "here is the doctor."

After having rapidly visited several invalids, who offered nothing either curious or interesting, doctor Griffon at last approached Jeanne Duport. At the sight of this anxious crowd, who, eager to see and learn, pressed round her bed, the unhappy woman, seized with a trembling of fear and shame, wrapped herself tightly in her bedclothes. The austere and meditative countenance of Doctor Griffon, his penetrating glance, his eyebrows always knit from habitual reflection, his harsh, impatient, and brief mode of speaking, increased still more the fears of Jeanne.

"A new subject," said the doctor, reading the label, on which was inscribed the nature of the malady of the new patient. After that, he cast upon Jeanne a long and investigating look.

There was a profound silence, during which the pupils, in imitation of the *prince of science*, curiously fixed their eyes upon the invalid.

The latter, to avoid, as much as possible, the painful effect caused by the idea of so many eyes being fixed upon her, never took hers off those of the physician, whom she looked at in complete agony. After looking at her attentively for several minutes, the doctor, remarking something peculiar in the yellow tinge which pervaded the patient's eye-ball, went closer to her; and, with the end of his finger, raising the eye-lid, he silently examined the crystalline lens. Several of the pupils, replying to a sort of mute invitation of their professor, went, one after the other, to examine Jeanne's eye. After that, the doctor proceeded to question her in the following manner: "Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," murmured the patient, more and more alarmed.

"Your age?"

"Thirty-six years and a half."

"Speak louder, then—the place of your birth?"

"Paris."

"Your profession?"

"Fringe-maker."

"Are you married?"

"Alas! yes," replied Jeanne, with a profound sigh.

"How long since?"

"Eighteen years."

"Have you any children?"

Here, instead of answering, the poor woman gave free vent to her tears, which she had long restrained.

"Your weeping does not answer my question—again I ask you, have you any children?"

"Two little boys, and a girl fifteen years of age."

He then put several questions to her, which it would be impossible for us to relate, but which Jeanne could not answer without much hesitation, and after many severe injunctions from the doctor: the poor woman felt as if dying with shame on being compelled to reply, before so numerous an auditory, to so many indelicate questions.

The doctor, being completely absorbed by his scientific meditations, did not think, in the least, of the painful confusion he was inflicting upon Jeanne, but continued: "How long have you been ill?"

"Four days," said Jeanne, wiping away her tears.

"Relate to us how your malady first attacked you."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but—there are so many persons—I dare not ——"

"Where, in the name of goodness, do you come from?" said the doctor; "you would, I suppose, have me bring a confessional with me. Come, come, speak, and make haste about it.

* No one can be more convinced than we are, of the knowledge and humanity of the studious and enlightened class of young men who devote themselves to an apprenticeship of the healing art. We only desire that some of the professors, who instruct them, would give more frequent examples of that compassionate delicacy, of that charitable mildness of demeanour, which would have such salutary effect upon the minds of invalids.

Don't be uneasy; we are only a family party, though rather a numerous one," added the prince of science, who happened to be, that day, in a particular good humour. "Come, let's have it."

More and more intimidated, Jeanne hesitated and stammered at every word: "I had, sir—a quarrel with my husband—regarding my children—that is to say, about my eldest daughter. He wished to take her away from me. You will understand, sir, that I did not like this, on account of a wicked woman with whom he lives, and who might give a bad example to my child; then my husband, who was tipsy—oh! sir, if it had not been for that, he would not have acted so—my husband pushed me very hard—I fell down—and—a short time afterwards, I began to vomit blood."

"Bah! bah! your husband pushed you, and you fell down! you are making the best of it; he certainly did more than to push you—he must have hit you on the stomach, very sharply, and several times, too; and, perhaps, he even trod upon you when you were on the ground. Come, tell us the truth."

"Ah! sir, I assure you that he had been drinking—but for that, he would not have been so brutal."

"Brutal or kind, drunk or sober—that is not the question; I am not an examining judge—all I want is to ascertain a fact: you have been thrown down, and furiously trampled upon—is not that the case?"

"Alas! sir, yes," said Jeanne, bursting into tears, "and yet I never gave him any cause for complaint; I work as hard as I can, and I ——"

"The epigastrium must be very painful; you must feel great heat there!" said the doctor, interrupting Jeanne. "You must feel ill at ease, lassitude, and nausea."

"Yes, sir; I only came here at the last extremity, and when my strength had entirely failed me. Had it not been for that, I should not have abandoned my children, and for whom I feel so uneasy—for they have only me; and then, Catherine—ah! it is for her, above all, that I feel uneasy. Oh! sir, did you but know ——"

"Your tongue," said Doctor Griffon, again interrupting the patient.

This order appeared so strange to Jeanne, who thought she had excited some compassion in the doctor, that she did not answer him at all, but looked at him with astonishment.

"Come, let us see this tongue, which you make so good a use of," said the doctor, smiling; and then he, with his finger, pushed down Jeanne's nether jaw.

After having made his pupils successively touch and examine the tongue of the patient, for the purpose of proving to them its colour and its dryness, the doctor appeared to be considering for a moment. Jeanne, overcoming her fears, said, in a trembling voice: "I wish to tell you, sir, that neighbours of mine, as poor as I am, have been so good as to promise they will take charge of two of my children, but only for eight days. This is doing a great deal. By that time I must be at home again; therefore, I beg of you, for the love of God, to cure me as quickly as possible—or so far that I may be able to sit up and work. I have only a week before me—for ——"

"Face discoloured—in a state of complete prostration—and, notwithstanding, pulse strong, hard, and quick," alluding to Jeanne, with an imperturbable countenance. "Observe her attentively, gentlemen; oppression and heat in the epigastrium: all these symptoms denounce, positively, a *hématémèse*—probably complicated by a *hepatites*, brought on by domestic vexations, which is also indicated by the discolouration of the eye-ball, which, you will observe, has a yellow tinge. The subject has received blows in the region of the epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting of blood has necessarily been occasioned by some organic injury inflicted on certain parts of the viscera. Upon this subject, I shall direct your attention to a singular point—a very singular one. In making *post mortem* examinations upon those who have died from affections such as this patient is attacked by, we have observed singularly variable results. Sometimes, when the malady is very acute, and very serious, it, in a few days, carries off the patient, and yet no trace of its existence is to be discovered. At other times, the spleen, the liver, and the pancreas, give evidence of injury more or less severe. It is probable that the subject we are now examining has suffered some injuries of that nature; we are, therefore, about to assure ourselves upon this head, and you will ascertain it for yourselves by an attentive examination of the patient." And, with a rapid movement, Doctor Griffon, throwing the clothes to the foot of the bed, completely exposed Jeanne to public view.

We feel repugnance in describing the painful struggles of this unhappy woman, who, burning with shame, and sobbing, implored the doctor and his assistants to desist. But, upon this threat being pronounced: "You shall be sent out of the hospital, if you do not submit to the established rules"—a threat so overpowering to those to whom the hospital is the only and last refuge—Jeanne submitted to a public examination, which lasted a very considerable time; for Doctor Griffon analysed and explained every symptom, and the most studious among the assistants wished to join practice to theory, and to assure themselves, by their own observations, of the physical state of the subject.

After this cruel scene, Jeanne was so violently affected, that she fell into hysterics, for which the doctor gave an additional prescription. He then continued his round.

The doctor soon arrived at the bed occupied by Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont, a victim, like her mother, to the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand. A fresh and terrible example of the fatal consequences which ensue from a breach of trust—a crime so slightly punished by the laws!

Mademoiselle de Fermont wore the linen night-cap furnished by the hospital. She was lying with her head languidly pressing the bolster of her bed. Notwithstanding the ravages of sickness, there was still to be observed, in that sweet and open countenance, the traces of high-born beauty. After a night of acute pain, the poor child had fallen into a sort of feverish drowsiness, before the doctor and his scientific followers had entered the ward, nor had the noise made by them yet awakened her.

"A fresh subject, gentlemen," said the prince of science, looking at the ticket which one of the students handed to him. Nature of disease—'slow, nervous fever.' "The deuce!" exclaimed the doctor, with an expression of profound satisfaction; "if the physician on duty has not been misled, this is quite a windfall. I have long desired to meet with a 'slow, nervous fever,' for it is not a disease to which the poor are subject. These affections spring mostly from violent per-

turbations arising from the social position of the subject, and it necessarily follows, that the higher the position of the person, the more violent is the perturbation. It is, besides, one of the most remarkable affections, from its peculiar characteristics. It has been known from the earliest antiquity. The writings of Hippocrates leave no doubt upon the matter, and this is perfectly natural. This fever, as I have said, is caused by the most violent affliction, and affliction is coeval with the existence of the world. It is a singular circumstance, however, that before the eighteenth century, this malady was not positively described by any author. It was Huxman, who, from so many causes, did honour to the profession of that period. It was Huxman, as I have said, who was the first to give a description of nervous fevers—a monography which has since become classical; and yet it was a malady, as I may say, of primary formation," added the doctor, laughing. "Ha! ha! ha! It belongs to that great, ancient, and illustrious family, *febris*, the origin of which is enveloped in the night of time. But do not let us be too sanguine. Let us see whether we have really the good fortune to possess a sample of this singular affection. This would be doubly desirable, for I have long had a great desire to experiment, by using phosphorus internally. Yes, gentlemen," rejoined the doctor, observing a kind of shuddering curiosity among his auditory—"yes, gentlemen, phosphorus; it is a very interesting experiment which I wish to try—it is a very bold one! But *audaces fortuna juvat*, and the opportunity would be an excellent one. We will, first of all, examine whether the subject will afford us, on every part of its body, but principally on the chest, evidences of that milliary eruption which, according to Huxman, is so symptomatic; and you will assure yourselves, by passing your hands over the skin, whether you discover that roughness which is the evidence of that eruption. But do not let us sell the lion's skin before we have killed him," added the prince of science, whose hilarity appeared to have increased, and placing his hands on Mademoiselle de Fermont's shoulders, he slightly shook her, to awake her.

The young girl shuddered, and opened her large eyes, which her disease had sadly hollowed. Her stupefaction and her terror will be readily conceived. While a crowd of men surrounded her bed, intently watching her, she felt the doctor's hand raising the bed-clothes, and endeavouring to take hold of one of hers, that he might feel her pulse. She appeared to exert all her remaining strength, to utter a shriek of terror, and exclaimed: "Help, mother! help!"

By an almost providential chance, at the moment when the cries of Mademoiselle de Fermont had made the Count de Saint-Remy spring from his chair—for he had recognised her voice—the door of the ward was opened, and a lady, dressed in mourning, entered hurriedly, accompanied by the director of the hospital. That lady was the Marquise d'Harville.

"For heaven's sake, sir!" said she, with great anxiety, "conduct me to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"Will you take the trouble to follow me, madame?" replied the director, respectfully. "This young lady is at No. 17, in this ward."

"Unhappy child! here—here!" said the Marquise d'Harville, wiping away her tears. "This is too terrible!"

The marquise, preceded by the director, rapidly approached the group assembled round the bed of Mademoiselle de Fermont, when she heard these words pronounced with indignation: "I tell you, this is a shameful murder! You will kill her, sir!"

"But, my dear Saint-Remy, listen to me then."

"I repeat, sir, that your conduct is atrocious. I consider Mademoiselle de Fermont is my daughter, and I forbid you to approach her. I will immediately have her removed from this place."

"But, my dear friend, this is a case of slow, nervous fever, rarely offered. I wished to try phosphorus upon it—this opportunity is unique. You must promise me, at all events, that I shall attend her. What does it matter where you take her to, since you deprive my class of so interesting a subject?"

"If you were not a madman, you would be a monster."

Clémence listened to these words with increasing anguish; but the crowd was so compact around the bed, that it was necessary for the director to call out, in a loud voice: "Room, gentlemen, if you please; room for the Marquise d'Harville, who has come to see No. 17."

At these words, the pupils drew back, with as much haste as respectful admiration, on perceiving the lovely face of Clémence, which her emotion had tinged with the most lively hues.

"Madame d'Harville!" exclaimed the Count de Saint-Remy, roughly pushing aside the doctor, and hurrying towards Clémence. "Ah! it is heaven which has sent one of its angels here! Madame, I knew that you felt an interest in these two unfortunate ladies. More fortunate than myself, you have discovered them, while it was chance only that brought me here, and to be present at a scene of unheard-of barbarity. Unhappy child! Look, madame—look! And you, gentlemen, in the names of your daughters, or your sisters, take pity on a child of only sixteen years of age. I entreat you, leave her with Madame d'Harville, and these good sisters. When she shall have recovered from her swoon, I will have her taken from this place."

"Well, be it so; I will sign her discharge," cried the doctor: "but I will follow her up. I will keep tight hold of you. It is a subject that belongs to me; and do what you will, I will attend upon her. I will not venture the phosphorus, of course, but I will sit up nights, if it be necessary, as I sat up with you, ungrateful Saint-Remy; for this fever is as singular as yours was—they are relations, who have the same right to my interest."

"Horrible man! why have you so much knowledge?" said the Count de Saint-Remy, knowing that he could not confide Mademoiselle de Fermont to more skilful hands.

"Is it not quite natural?" whispered the doctor to him. "I have much science, because I make experiments; because I run great risks, and practise a good deal on my patients. Then I am to have my case of slow fever, you ill-natured fellow?"

"Yes; but will it be safe to remove her immediately?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for God's sake, take yourself and your suite away."

"Come, gentlemen," said the prince of science; "our class will be deprived of a most interesting study, but I will keep you informed of all that

passes." And Doctor Griffon, accompanied by his auditory, went on his rounds, leaving the Count de Saint-Remy and the Marquise d'Harville with Mademoiselle de Fermont.

During the scene which we have just described, Mademoiselle de Fermont remained in a swoon, and was left to the tender care of Clémence and two nuns. One of them sustained the heavy and almost lifeless head of the young girl, while Madame d'Harville, leaning upon the bed, wiped away with her handkerchief the cold and clammy perspiration which inundated the forehead of the invalid. M. de Saint-Remy contemplated this picture with feelings of lively emotion, when, all at once, a direful thought crossed his mind; he approached Clémence, and said to her, in a low voice: "And the mother of this unfortunate girl, madame?"

The marquise turned towards M. de Saint-Remy, and replied to him, with a thrilling expression of deep sorrow: "This child has no longer a mother!"

"God of heaven! dead?"

"It was only on my return, last night, that I learnt the address of Madame de Fermont, and that her life was despaired of. At one o'clock, this morning, I was at her lodgings with my physician. Ah! sir, what a picture! — misery in all its horrors, and no hope of saving the poor, expiring mother! Her agony must have been frightful, for she had been thinking of her daughter. Her last words were: "My daughter! my daughter!"

"What a death! Good heavens! She, so tender, so devoted a mother! it is really quite horrible!"

One of the sisters of charity interrupted the conversation of M. de Saint-Remy and Madame d'Harville, and said to the latter: "The young lady is very weak; she hears with difficulty; she may presently come to herself. The shock she received just now, has almost destroyed her. If you are not afraid, madame, of remaining here until the patient recovers herself completely, I will offer you my chair."

"Give it me," said Clémence, sitting down by the bed-side; "I shall not leave Mademoiselle de Fermont. I wish, at least, that she should see a face she knows, when she opens her eyes; and afterwards, I shall take her away with me, as, fortunately, the doctor says she may be removed without danger."

"May you be blessed, madame, for all the good you are doing! but pardon me, if I have not yet told you my name. So much grief—such violent emotions—have quite bewildered me. I am the Count de Saint-Remy, madame. The husband of Madame de Fermont, was my most intimate friend. I resided at Angers. I left that city in consequence of my uneasiness at not receiving intelligence of these noble and worthy ladies. They had also, up to that time, resided at Angers; and it was reported they had been completely ruined. Their situation was the more painful, as, until then, they had lived in opulence."

"Ah! sir, you do not know all. Madame de Fermont has been basely plundered."

"By her notary, I suppose. I had a long time suspected so myself."

"This man was a perfect monster, sir. Alas! this crime is not the only one that he committed; but happily," said Clémence, exultingly, thinking of Rodolph, "a providential genius has brought him to an account, and I was enabled to close the eyes of Madame de Fermont, assuring her of the future comfort of her child. Her death was, therefore, less painful to her."

"I can well understand that; knowing that her child had you for a protector, my poor friend must have died more tranquilly."

"Not only has Mademoiselle de Fermont acquired my warmest interest in her, but her fortune will be restored to her."

"Her fortune! How can that be? The notary ——"

"Has been obliged to refund the money which he had appropriated to himself by a most horrible crime."

"A crime?"

"The wretch had assassinated the brother of Madame de Fermont, in order that it should be believed that the unhappy man had committed suicide, after having squandered the fortune of his sister."

"How horrible! 'tis really scarcely credible; and yet, in consequence of my suspicions as to the notary, I had retained some vague doubts as to the reality of the suicide; for Renneville was all honour and loyalty. And the sum which the notary has disgorged?"

"It is deposited in the hands of a venerable priest, the curate of Bonne-Nouvelle; it will be delivered to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"This restitution does not suffice for human justice. Madame, the scaffold claims this notary; for he has not committed one murder only, but two: the death of Madame de Fermont, the sufferings which her daughter endures upon this hospital bed, have been caused by the infamous breach of trust, of that miserable wretch."

"And that wretch committed another murder, as frightful, and as atrociously contrived."

"What is it you say, madame?"

"If he has rid himself of the brother of Madame de Fermont, by a pretended suicide, that he might, with impunity, enjoy the money he had stolen, it is only a few days ago, he rid himself of a young girl, whom it was his interest to make way with, by causing her to be drowned, being certain that her death would be attributed to accident."

M. de Saint-Remy shuddered, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise, thinking of Fleur-de-Marie, and exclaimed: "Gracious heaven! madame, what a singular coincidence!"

"What is it so much moves you, sir?"

"That young girl! Where was it that he wished to have her drowned?"

"In the Seine, near Asnières, I am told."

"'Tis she! 'tis she!" cried M. de Saint-Remy.

"Of whom is it that you speak, sir?"

"Of the young girl that monster wished to murder!"

"Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Do you know her, madame?"

"Poor child! I loved her tenderly. Ah, sir! did you but know how beautiful and interesting was that girl!—But how is it that ——"

"Dr. Griffon and myself were the first to assist her."

"To assist her? oh! where?"

"At the Ravageurs' Island, after she had been saved."

"Saved! Fleur-de-Marie saved?"

"By an excellent creature, who, at the risk of her own life, dragged her out of the Seine. But what is the matter with you, madame?"

"Ah, sir! I dare not yet believe in so much

happiness; I still fear to be the dupe of some misapprehension. Let me entreat you—tell me—this young girl that you speak of, pray describe her to me."

"Of most admirable beauty — an angelic countenance."

"Has she large blue eyes? light hair?"

"Yes, madame."

"Was she with an old woman, when she was drowned?"

"It was only yesterday, that she could speak at all, and she is still very weak; she told us of that circumstance—an aged woman was with her."

"God be thanked!" fervently exclaimed Clémence, clasping her hands. "I can inform him that his lovely charge still lives!* Pardon me, sir; but, did you know how happy the intelligence you have given me, makes me, not only for myself, but for a person who, still more than I, loved and protected Fleur-de-Marie. But let me entreat you — tell me — where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnières, in the house of one of the physicians of this hospital, Dr. Griffon, who, notwithstanding some extravagances, possesses excellent qualities. It was to his house that Fleur-de-Marie was taken, and, since that time, he has attended her with unceasing care."

"And is she out of danger?"

"Yes, madame; but only three days ago: and to-day she will be allowed to return to her protectors."

"Oh! it is I! it is I who will have the care—or, rather, I shall have the delight — of conducting her to those who, having believed her dead, so bitterly lament her loss."

"I can appreciate their grief, madame, for it is impossible to know Fleur-de-Marie, without becoming spell-bound, by the goodness of that angelic creature; her sweetness and her gracefulness, exercise an undefinable empire over all those who approach her. The woman who saved her, and who has sat up with her day and night, and watched her as if she had been her own daughter, is of so furious a temper, that she has been surnamed Louve—consider that. Well, one word from Fleur-de-Marie tames her instantly. I have seen her sobbing, and shrieking with despair, when, after a fresh attack, Dr. Griffon almost despaired of saving the life of Fleur-de-Marie."

"That does not surprise me; I know Louve."†

"You, madame?" said the Count de Saint-Remy, much astonished; "you know Louve?"

"This cannot fail to surprise you, sir," said the marquise, smiling sweetly; for she was happy—oh! so happy—when thinking of the delightful surprise she was about to afford the prince. What would have been her ecstacy, had she but known that 'twas a daughter, whom he believed dead, that she was about to restore to the arms of Rodolph! "Ah! sir," said she to the Count de Saint-Remy, "this day is such a happy one to me, that I should wish it to be so to others. It appears to me, that in this place there must be many unfortunate and worthy persons to relieve: it would be an appropriate mode of commemorating the happy news which you have given me." And then, addressing the nun, who had just given a few spoonfuls of a draught to Mademoiselle de Fermont, she said: "My good sister, is she reviving?"

"Not yet, madame; she is so weak. Poor young lady, one can hardly feel the beating of her pulse."

"I will wait here till she is in a fit state to be removed in my carriage. But tell me, sister, among all these unfortunate invalids, do you not know some who are particularly deserving of interest and pity, to whom I might be useful before leaving the hospital?"

"Ah! madame, 'tis God has sent you here! There is yonder," pointing to the bed of Pique Vinaigre's sister, "a poor woman who is very ill, and much to be pitied. She did not come here till after all her strength had left her. She is continually despairing because she has been obliged to leave her little children, who have only her in the world to support them. She was saying just now, to the doctor, that, well or ill, she must leave the hospital within eight days, because her neighbours had promised her to take care of her children for a week only; and after that time, they would not be able to provide for them."

"Take me immediately to her bed, I beg of you, my good sister," said the Marquise d'Harville, rising, and following the nun.

Scarcely recovered from the nervous attack which the examination of Doctor Griffon had occasioned, Jeanne Duport had not perceived the entrance of the marquise into the ward. Her astonishment, therefore, was great, when she saw Clémence raise the curtain of her bed, and say to her, with a look of commiserating kindness: "You must no longer allow yourself to be distressed by fears for your children's welfare; I will take them under my care. Only think of getting well, that you may soon return to them."

Jeanne Duport imagined that she was dreaming. In the same place where Doctor Griffon and his studious auditory had made her undergo so cruel an inquisition, she saw a young lady of enchanting beauty, who was addressing her with words of pity, of consolation, and of hope. The emotion of Pique Vinaigre's sister was so great, that she could not pronounce a single word. She clasped her hands together, as if she was praying, and looked with feelings of adoration upon her benefactress.

"Jeanne, Jeanne!" said Lorraine, in a half-whisper to her, "why don't you answer that good lady?" And then Lorraine, addressing herself to the marquise, said: "Ah! madame, you can conceive that she would have died of despair, thinking that her poor children were abandoned; would you not, Jeanne?"

"Let me beg you once more, my good mother, to tranquillise yourself. You need not feel any uneasiness about them," rejoined the marquise, pressing between her small and delicate hands the burning hand of Jeanne Duport; "you may feel quite sure they will be taken care of; and even if you wish it, you shall leave the hospital this very day. You shall be well attended at your own house—you shall want for nothing; and in this way, your children can be always with you. If your lodgings are unhealthy or too small, you shall have more comfortable ones provided for you, so that you may be in one

* Madame d'Harville, who had arrived only the night before, was ignorant that Goualeuse, whom Rodolph believed dead, was his daughter. Some days before, the prince, in writing to the marquise, had informed her of the new crime committed by the notary, as well as the restitution he had compelled him to make. It was through the exertions of M. Bidinet, that the address of Madame de Fermont had been discovered.

† In her visit to Saint-Lazare, Madame d'Harville had heard the directress of the place, Madame Armand, speak of Louve.

room, and your children in another. You shall have a good nurse, who shall look after them, and attend to you at the same time. And when your health is re-established, should you not find work, I will give you the means of waiting for it till it does come. From to-day, I will take upon myself to provide for your children's future welfare."

"Gracious God! what do I hear? Cherubims descend, then, from heaven, as we are told in our prayer-books," said Jeanne Duport, almost beside herself with joy, and hardly daring to look her benefactress in the face. "Why should so much goodness be shown to me? what have I done to deserve it? This cannot be possible! Am I to leave this hospital, where I have wept so much, and gone through so much sufferings? and never leave my children? and have a nurse? Why, it appears a miracle worked by the Almighty!" And, the poor woman spoke the truth.

Oh! that it could be generally understood, how sweet and easy it is to work these miracles, and at such a trifling cost!

Alas! to persons steeped in poverty, abandoned or rejected by all the world, a sudden and unlooked-for deliverance from misery, accompanied by kind words, by charitable attentions—must not this have, does it not have, the supernatural appearance of a miracle? It was, therefore, *humanely* permitted to Jeanne Duport, to doubt the probability of the unheard-of good fortune which the Marquise d'Harville promised, and which she never could have even hoped for.

"It is no miracle, my good mother," replied Clémence, very much affected. "What I am doing for you," she added, blushing slightly at the resolution which Rodolph had dictated—"what I am doing for you has been inspired by a generous spirit, who has taught me to compassionate misfortune. It is him, whom you must thank and bless."

"Ah! madame, I shall always bless both you and yours," said Jeanne Duport, weeping. "I beg your pardon for expressing myself so badly; but I am not accustomed to such great joys. It is the first time that I have ever experienced them."

"Well, do you see, Jeanne," said Lorraine, with much feeling, "there are to be found even among the rich, worthy souls, like Rigolette and Goualeuse—upon a grander scale, it is true; but as to the goodness of heart, it is the same in both."

The marquise, in great surprise, turned towards Lorraine, on hearing her pronounce these names. "Do you then know Goualeuse, and a young seamstress called Rigolette?" said Clemence to Lorraine.

"Yes, madame; Goualeuse, the good little angel, did for me last year—but, of course, according to her smaller means—what you are now doing for Jeanne. Yes, madame; it does me good to speak of it, and to repeat it to every one I meet with. Well, Goualeuse took me out of a cellar, where I was lying upon straw, and where I had been just confined, and had me and my infant carried to a room, in which there was a good bed and a cradle. Goualeuse had gone into all these expenses from pure charity; for she scarcely knew me, and was poor herself. Was not that admirable, madame?" said Lorraine, enthusiastically.

"Oh, yes! the charity of the poor towards the poor is great and holy!" said Clemence, her eyes streaming with sweet tears.

"It was the same with Mademoiselle Rigolette, who, according to her small means," continued Lorraine, "offered, only a few days since, her assistance to poor Jeanne."

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clemence, still more moved, for each of these two names, Goualeuse and Rigolette, recalled to her a noble action of Rodolph: "and you, my child, how can I be of service to you?" said she to Lorraine. "I should wish that the names you have uttered with so much gratitude, should bring good fortune to you also."

"I thank you, madame," said Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child, but it is dead; the malady I suffer from is incurable—it is a confirmed consumption. I have no further need of anything."

"Do not give way to such a fatal idea; at your age, so young as you are, there is always hope."

"Oh! no, madame; I know my fate. I do not complain. Only last night, I saw a person, suffering from the same malady, die in this ward; the death is very gentle. I thank you for your great goodness."

"Your state, perhaps, is not so alarming as you imagine."

"I do not deceive myself, madame; I feel it but too surely. But since you are so good—a great lady, such as you, has so much influence ——"

"Speak! tell me what you wish."

"I had asked Jeanne to render me a service; but as she is going, thanks to you!——"

"Well then, tell me—cannot I render you this service?"

"Certainly, madame; a word from you to the sisters, or the physician, would settle it at once."

"You may be assured, then, that I will say that word. What is it that you desire?"

"Since I saw the actress, who is dead, so dreadfully alarmed at the idea of being dissected after death, the same fear has taken possession of me. Jeanne had promised me to claim my body, and to have me buried."

"Oh! this is really too dreadful!" said Clemence, shuddering with horror. "One must come here to learn that, for the poor, there is misery and terror even beyond the grave!"

"Pardon, madame," continued Lorraine; "for a great lady, rich as you are, and as you deserve to be, this request is a most mournful one; I ought not to have made it."

"On the contrary, I thank you for having asked this of me. This has informed me of a torture that I was ignorant of; the knowledge of it will not be lost upon me. Be comforted; and although, I trust, that fatal moment is far distant, yet, when it does arrive, you may be assured that you shall repose in consecrated ground."

"Thanks! madame, thanks!" exclaimed Lorraine; "may I dare ask permission to kiss your hand?"

Clemence presented her hand to the parched lips of Lorraine.

"I thank you, madame: I shall now have some one to love and bless, with Goualeuse, to the last moment; and I shall no longer have such dreadful fears for what might happen after death."

This willingness to die, and these fears beyond the tomb, had affected the Marquise d'Harville most painfully. Leaning towards the sister, who had come to tell her that Mademoiselle de Fermont had completely recovered from her swoon,

she whispered to her: "Is that young woman really in such a state that her life is despaired of?" and, by a sign, she indicated the bed of Lorraine.

"Alas! yes, madame; Lorraine is given over by the physicians: she has not, perhaps, more than eight days to live."

* * *

Half an hour afterwards, the Marquise d'Harville, accompanied by the Count de Saint-Remy, left the hospital, taking with her the young orphan, from whom she had concealed her mother's death.

On the same day, a confidential person employed by the marquise, went to examine the miserable place which Jeanne Duport had lived in; where he obtained the most satisfactory information as to the conduct of that worthy woman. She then hired an apartment, consisting of two large and airy rooms, and a small one communicating with them, on the Quay d'Ecole, which in two hours, thanks to the ready resources of the Temple, were comfortably furnished.

The same evening, Jeanne Duport was conveyed to her new residence; where she found, waiting her arrival, her children, and an excellent nurse.

The same person had orders given to him to claim, and to have buried, the body of Lorraine, when she should fall a victim to her malady.

* * *

After having taken Mademoiselle de Fermont to her house, and having arranged everything for her comfort, the Marquise d'Harville immediately set out for Asnières, accompanied by the Count de Saint-Remy, to convey Fleur-de-Marie to Rodolph's house.

CHAPTER XI.

HOPE.

The first days of spring were approaching; the sun poured down warmer rays; the sky was clear, and the breezes gentle, when Fleur-de-Marie, leaning on the arm of the heroic Louve, was trying her strength in the garden of Doctor Griffon.

The reviving warmth of the sun, and the exercise of walking, had called a slight flush to the pale features of Goualeuse. Her peasant's dress having been torn from her by the wild energy of Louve's rescue, she was now clothed in dark blue merino, hanging loosely upon her form, and confined by a worsted cord around her delicate waist.

"What a delightful sunshine!" said she to Louve, halting at the foot of an arbour of green trees, with a southern exposure, and which arched a stone bench; "if you wish it, Louve, we will sit down here for a moment."

"Is there any need of asking me if I wish?" replied suddenly the bold wife of the poacher, shrugging her shoulders. She removed her shawl from her neck, and folding it in four parts, knelt down and placed it upon the soft sand of the walk, saying to Goualeuse: "Place your feet on that."

"But, Louve," said Goualeuse, who perceived too late the design of her companion, to prevent its execution—"but, Louve, you will spoil your shawl."

"I will have no excuses; the earth is moist," said Louve: and, taking up with authority the little feet of Fleur-de-Marie, she placed them upon the shawl.

"You will spoil me, Louve."

"You do not deserve to be spoiled, for you are always opposing what I wish to do for your good. Are you not tired? we have been walking for half an hour—the clock of Asnières has just struck twelve."

"I am somewhat fatigued, but I feel that this walk has been of great service to me."

"You confess that you were tired; and why didn't you ask me before to sit down?"

"Do not rebuke me; I did not perceive my fatigue; it is so pleasant to walk, after having been so long a time confined to the bed; to see the sun, the trees, the country, when I never expected to see them again."

"The fact is, that your life was despaired of within the last two days, poor Goualeuse; yes, I can now inform you, that the doctor had no hope of your recovery."

"You must know, that when I found myself beneath the water, I could not help remembering what a wicked woman told me when I was little—when she threatened to throw me to the fishes. Sometime since, she also wished to drown me; and then I said to myself: 'I am unfortunate—it is a fatality which I cannot avoid.'"

"Poor Goualeuse! was that your last thought, when you believed yourself lost?"

"Oh, no!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm; "when I knew that I was dying, my last thought was given to him, whom I look up to as my God—and when I felt myself reviving, my first thought was raised towards him!"

"It is a pleasure to do good to you, for you never forget it."

"No, indeed! it is so delightful to go to sleep with feelings of gratitude—and to awaken with them also!"

"One could throw herself into the fire for you!"

"Excellent Louve! I assure you, that one of the reasons why I am so happy to live, is the hope that I have of rendering you happy, by fulfilling my promise. You recollect the castles we built in the air at Saint-Lazare?"

"As for those, there is time enough yet remaining, now that you are saved. I am abundantly repaid, as my man says."

"I hope that the Count de Saint-Remy will soon tell me, that the physician will allow me to write to Madame Georges; she must be so solicitous about me—and M. Rodolph also," added Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes, and blushing anew at the thought of her benefactor; "perhaps they think that I am dead."

"And so do those brigands, who attempted to drown you."

"You suppose then, Louve, that it was not an accident?"

"Accident! the Martials call such things accidents. When I say the Martials, I do not include my husband—for he is not one of the family, no more than François and Amandine will be."

"But what interest could they have in my death? I have never wronged a human being. No one knows me."

"It is all the same thing; if the Martials are wretches enough to drown people, they are not foolish enough to do so without some selfish motive. Some words which the widow said to my man, after she was imprisoned, proved that to me."

"Has he then been to see his mother?—that terrible woman!"

"Yes; and there is no hope for her, nor Calebasse, nor Nicholas. They have discovered all their crimes. But the villain Nicholas, with the hope of saving his own life, has denounced his mother and sister, as guilty of another murder, and they will all have to suffer. The lawyers tell them, that there is no chance for them. The judges say, that an example is necessary."

"Oh! it is awful! A whole family executed!"

"Unless Nicholas escapes. He is in the same prison with a monster called Squelette, who is contriving a plot to escape with several others. Nicholas sent word of it to Martial by a prisoner who was released; for my man has been weak enough to visit his villanous brother at La Force, and encouraged by the visit, that wretch—may he have his deserts!—had the impudence to send word to my man, that he might escape at any moment; and that Martial must have some clothes and money ready at Father Micou's, by means of which he might conceal himself."

"Your Martial has a kind heart."

"As kind a heart as you please; but may the devil take me, if I allow my man to assist an assassin who wished to murder him. Martial will not inform of the plan of escape, and that is sufficient; besides, as you are in health again, Goualeuse, we—my man, the children, and myself—will soon start upon our journey. We will never again live in Paris: it was quite painful enough for Martial to be called the son of the guillotined—what will his shame be, when mother, brother, and sister, shall have suffered the same fate?"

"You must, at least, wait till I have spoken about you to M. Rodolph, if I see him again. You have given up your evil habits, and I told you that you should be recompensed for it, and I wish to fulfil my word. How can I, in any other manner, repay you for your kindness? You have saved my life, and have been as good as a sister to me during my sickness."

"True; but it would look like selfishness if I allowed you to solicit some reward from your protectors. You are saved, and I repeat it—I am repaid!"

"Hark!" said Louve, rising suddenly; "I think that I hear a carriage. Yes, yes! it is coming. Did you not see it pass before the gate? There is a lady in it."

"Good heaven!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with emotion; "I thought that I recognised——"

"Whom?"

"A young and beautiful lady whom I saw at Saint Lazare, and who has been very kind to me."

"She knows, then, that you are here?"

"I do not know: but she is acquainted with the person of whom I spoke to you; and who, if she wished, and I know that she will, can make real the castles in the air."

"The place of gamekeeper for my man, and a cottage for us in the middle of the woods," said Louve, with a sigh—"those are mere dreams; too beautiful to come true."

A sudden noise of footsteps was heard behind the bower. François and Amandine, who, thanks to the kindness of the Count de Saint-Remy, had not left Louve, arrived, panting, and crying out: "Louve! here is a beautiful lady, with the Count de Saint-Remy; they wish to see Fleur-de-Marie, immediately."

"I was not mistaken," said Goualeuse.

At the same instant, the count appeared, accompanied by the Marquise d'Harville. Hardly had Clémence perceived Fleur-de-Marie, when she ran hastily to her, and clasping her in her arms, exclaimed: "Dear, dear child! I have found you at last!—saved, miraculously saved from a horrible death!—with what rapture I gaze upon you once more! I, who like your friends, had supposed that you were lost!—we have all mourned for you as dead!"

"I am delighted to meet you again, madame, for I have never forgotten your kindness to me," said Fleur-de-Marie, responding to the tenderness of the marquise, with charming grace and modesty.

"You cannot conceive of the surprise and joy of your friends, who at this moment lament you so bitterly."

Fleur-de-Marie, taking the hand of the brave Louve, who had stepped aside abashed, said, in presenting her to the marquise: "Since my safety is so precious to my benefactors, allow me to solicit their kindness for my poor companion, who saved my life, at the risk of her own."

"Be assured, my child, that your friends will prove to the noble Louve, that it is to her alone, that they are indebted for the happiness of seeing you alive."

Louve, confused and abashed, could make no reply. She did not dare raise her eyes to the marquise, so imposing to her was he presence of a lady of such a character, and she could scarcely conceal her astonishment, in hearing Clémence pronounce her name.

"But we have not a moment to lose," said the marquise; "I am impatient to bear you away, Fleur-de-Marie; I have, in my carriage, a shawl and warm cloaks. Come, come my child." Then, speaking to the count, she said: "Will you be kind enough to give my address to this courageous woman, that she may call upon me to-morrow, to bid farewell to Fleur-de-Marie. Thus, we shall compel you to come and see us," said the marquise to Louve.

"Yes, yes, madame! be sure that I shall go," replied Louve, "since it is to bid farewell to Goualeuse! I should be miserable if I could not embrace her once more."

Within a few moments, Goualeuse and the marquise were on the road to Paris.

* * *

Rodolph, after having been present at the death of Jacques Ferrand, who had been so frightfully punished for his crimes, returned to his own mansion, in a state of extreme depression. After a long, sleepless, and distressing night, he had sent to Sir Walter Murphy, to confide to this old and faithful friend, the overwhelming discovery which he had the day before made concerning Fleur-de-Marie.

The worthy squire was struck with despondency, for better than any one else, he could comprehend the profundity of the prince's woe. Rodolph, with a countenance which expressed the agony he had endured, with eyes moist with recent tears, had just made to Murphy the distressing disclosure.

"Courage!" said the squire, wiping his eyes, for, in spite of his phlegm, he had wept. "Yes, courage, my lord! I offer no vain consolation, for your sorrow is incurable."

"You are right; my anguish of yesterday was nothing compared with that of to-day."

"Yesterday, my lord, you experienced the crushing weight of the blow, but the wound it has left, will become more painful day by day; therefore, courage! A cloud of impenetrable darkness hangs over your futurity."

"Oh! the contempt and horror with which that woman inspired me yesterday! But may God have pity upon her, she is now in his awful presence! Surprise, disappointment, horror, crushed in my bosom every throb of tenderness; but I can no longer restrain myself. My eyes refused the relief of tears, but in your presence I can weep. Yes, you see how weak and infirm I am; but pardon, pardon me! Tears again! tears always! my child—my lost—my beloved child!"

"Weep, weep, my lord! We have no consolation but in tears! The loss is one which can never be repaired!"

"From what a brilliant destiny death has snatched that dear one! What a fate was in reserve for her, which would have buried in oblivion, the misery and suffering that the poor dove of innocence and beauty has endured!"

"The transition might have been too sudden for the unfortunate being, who, in her brief life, encountered nearly every woe to which humanity is heir."

"Oh! no, no! If you can conceive of the caution, the delicacy, the reserve, with which I should have imparted to her the mystery of her birth; how I should have drawn her confiding heart gently towards that revelation; how smooth and even I should have made the path to the discovery! If that was the only obstacle," added the prince, with a bitter smile, "my mind would have been wrapt in delightful composure. No sorrow nor trouble would have marred my unalloyed joy. Kneeling down before that idol of my dreams, towards whom the ungratified yearnings of my heart have always gushed, I should have said to her: 'Be happy—for ever happy, beloved child of suffering. You are my daughter!' But no! alas, no! this would have been too sudden, too unforeseen, too unexpected. I should have restrained my eager love, and have told her, in a calm voice: 'My child, I have a secret to disclose, which will greatly astonish you. Imagine that your parents have been discovered; your father is still living; he is before you; I—I am your father, my beloved child!'" The prince again interrupted. "No, no! even that disclosure would be too sudden; but I cannot avoid it; the revelation will instantly come to my lips. It is essential to enforce upon myself such strong controul — you understand my emotions, my old friend: I am sure that you do. To be in the presence of my own, my only child, and be under the necessity of restraining my parental love!" And then, giving way to a new paroxysm of despair, Rodolph exclaimed: "Of what use are these vain forms of address? I never shall speak to her again! The most frightful feature of the affliction, is the remembrance, that my daughter was once by her father's side for an entire day; during that day—for ever cursed—for ever sacred—when I conducted her to the farm—that day, when the treasures of her angel-like soul were revealed to me in all their purity! I was present at the budding, the blossoming of her adorable nature, and no voice whispered in my heart: 'It is your daughter—your daughter!' Blind and heartless being, that could not divine the sacred ties between us! I am unworthy to be a father!"

"But, my lord ——"

"Was it not in my power," continued the prince, "never to leave her side? Why did not I, who mourned so grievously the loss of my child, adopt her as my own? Why, instead of committing her to the hands of Madame Georges, did I not retain her near my heart? I should now have only to have opened my arms to embrace my child. Why—why did I not do it? Because we never do all the good in our power; because we never appreciate a treasure, until it has for ever disappeared; because, instead of elevating at once to her deserved greatness, that excellent image of God, who, in spite of misery, abandonment, and wretchedness, was more noble in mind and heart, than if she had never passed triumphantly through her temptations, I even congratulated myself for having placed her on a farm, under the protection of excellent people, as I would have done for the first interesting beggar that crossed my path. It is all my own fault! my own fault! If I had done my duty, she would now have been alive! I am righteously punished! I have deserved it all, for being a bad son, and a bad father!"

Murphy knew that grief of this nature was inconsolable, and he was silent.

After a long silence, Rodolph continued, in a voice that was deeply moved: "I will no longer remain here; Paris is hateful to me. To-morrow I will depart."

"You are right, my lord."

"We will take the farm of Bouqueval in our route; I will shut myself up, for a few hours, in the room where my daughter passed the only happy days of her suffering life; there I will garner, with religious care, every relic of her existence—the books, in which she commenced to read, the papers upon which her first lines were traced, the garments that clothed her beloved form, everything, all; even the furniture and the hangings, upon which her eyes frequently fell—of the chamber itself, I myself will make an exact drawing; and in Gerolstein, in the secluded park, where I have raised a monument to the memory of my insulted father, I will build a small tenement, to which that room shall be transferred; there I will retire, to weep for my daughter! One of those melancholy monuments will remind me of my crime against my father, and the other, of the punishment for it, which reached me through my child." After another silence, Rodolph added: "Let everything be prepared for our departure to-morrow."

Murphy, with the motive of driving from the prince these distressing reflections, said to him: "Everything will be prepared, my lord; but you must remember, that the marriage of the son of Madame Georges and Rigolette, is to be celebrated at Bouqueval, to-morrow. Not only have you secured to Germain a competency, and given also a magnificent dowry to his bride, but you also promised to attend their marriage, as a witness; and, at that time only, were they to be informed of the name of their benefactor."

"It is true that I have promised it, and they are now at the farm. I cannot go there to-morrow, without being a witness of that ceremony; and yet, I confess that I have not the courage to do so."

"The sight of those young people's happiness would, perhaps, sooth your sorrow."

"No, no! grief is selfish, and loves solitude. To-morrow, you shall bear them my excuse, and fulfil the duties I had reserved for myself: you will ask Madame Georges to collect everything which belonged to my daughter, and to have a drawing of her chamber taken, and forwarded to me in Germany."

[Interview between the Father and the Daughter.]

"And will you depart, my lord, without bidding adieu to the marquise d'Harville?"

At the recollection of Clémence, Rodolph shuddered. Love, ardent and profound, still lingered in his bosom; but at that moment it seemed extinguished by the waves of bitterness with which his heart overflowed. By a strange anomaly, the prince was conscious that the tender affection of the marquise could alone alleviate the affliction which had befallen him; and he reproached himself for the thought, as unjust towards the child whose loss should entirely absorb his mind.

"I must depart without seeing Clémence," replied Rodolph. "A few days ago, I informed her of my sorrow at Fleur-de-Marie's death. When she learns that the lost one was my daughter, she will understand that there is grief, or rather a fatal punishment, which we must have the courage to bear alone—yes, entirely alone—in order that it may be the means of expiation; and that which destiny has imposed upon me is terrible—yes, terrible! for it has commenced when the decline of life has also begun."

A light and gentle knock was now heard at the door of Rodolph's apartment. The prince made a gesture of impatience. Murphy arose, and went to open the door. Through the partly-opened aperture, an aid-de-camp of the prince spoke a few words to Murphy, in a low voice. Murphy replied with a motion of his head, and, turning to Rodolph, said: "Will my lord permit me to leave the room for a moment? Some one desires to speak with me instantly, on the service of your royal highness."

"Go," replied the prince.

Murphy had scarcely left the room, when Rodolph, hiding his face in his hands, sobbed aloud. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "my emotions frighten

me! My soul overflows with bitterness and hatred; the presence of my best friend weighs heavily upon me; the remembrance of a noble and pure love assails and troubles me; and again—but this is cowardly and base! yes; I heard last evening, with barbarous joy, of the death of Sarah—that unnatural mother, who has slain my daughter. I am pleased in recalling the horrible agony of the monster, who was the instrument of that crime. Oh, rage! I arrived too late!" he exclaimed, starting on his seat; "and yesterday, I did no suffer the anguish of to-day—and yesterday, as to-day, I knew of my daughter's death; but I did not confess to myself those truths, which will henceforth poison my life. I have seen my daughter—I have spoken to her—I have admired all her adorable qualities. How much time I lost at that farm! I only visited her three times, when I might have gone there every day. But, what do I say? I might have kept her for ever under the same roof with myself! The thought will be endless torture to me!" And the bereaved man found a cruel pleasure in reviving a thought which was inconsolable; for it is natural for great sorrows constantly to revive themselves in the mind.

The door of the room was suddenly opened, and Murphy entered, unnaturally pale — so pallid, that the prince partially rose, and exclaimed: "Murphy, what afflicts you?"

"Nothing, my lord!"

"But you are very pale."

"It is from surprise."

"What surprise?"

"The Marquise d'Harville."

"Clémence? Good God! what new misfortune impends?"

"No, no, my lord! Be comforted; she is here, in the antechamber."

"She here? the marquise in my house? It is impossible!"

"It was that which caused me so much surprise."

"In the name of heaven! what powerful motive could have induced such a step?"

"I know not; but I cannot understand my own emotions."

"You are hiding something from me, Murphy."

"Upon my honour! no, my lord! I am only aware of what the marquise told me."

"But what did she tell you?"

"'Sir Walter,' and her voice was moved, though her countenance was radiant with joy, 'my presence here must astonish you much; but there are certain circumstances so imperious as to leave but little thought to waste upon propriety. Beg his highness instantly to grant me a few moments' conversation in your presence; for I know that the prince has no better friend in the world than yourself. I might have begged of him the favour of calling upon me, but it would have caused an hour's delay; and the prince will be grateful to me for not deferring the interview for a moment,' added she, with an expression which caused me to start."

"But," said Rodolph, with a voice tremulous with emotion, and turning even more pale than Murphy, "I cannot divine the cause of your emotion, your trouble, your pallor; there must be something more to disclose. That interview ——"

"Upon my honour, I know nothing but what I have revealed. These words of the marquise, have filled me with anxiety, and I cannot explain the reason. But you, my lord, are very pale."

"I!" said Rodolph, supporting himself upon a chair, for he felt his knees trembling beneath him.

"I tell you, my lord, that you are as agitated as myself. What can be the cause?"

"If I should die upon the spot, ask the marquise to come in."

By a strange sympathy, the sudden and extraordinary visit of the marquise had awakened in the mind of the prince and Murphy, the same vague and extravagant hope; but that hope seemed to them so unnatural, that neither would confess it to the other. The marquise, followed by Murphy, entered the apartment of the prince.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATHER AND THE DAUGHTER.

The marquise was ignorant that Fleur-de-Marie was the daughter of Rodolph; but overjoyed with the thought of restoring a *protegée* in whom he felt such a tender interest, supposed that the child might be introduced without any preliminary precaution. She had left Fleur-de-Marie in the carriage, because she was not informed whether Rodolph was willing to reveal his rank to the young girl, by receiving her into his house. But, perceiving the dejection of the prince's countenance, which betrayed his inconsolable despair, observing in his eyes the traces of recent tears, the thought flashed across the mind of Clémence, that he must have been struck with some calamity, much more severe than the death of Goualeuse. Forgetting the object of her visit, she exclaimed: "Good heaven! my lord, what affliction has befallen you?"

"Can you be ignorant of it, Clémence? Alas! all hope has fled. Your haste, and the conversation with me which you have solicited with so much earnestness, suggested the belief ——"

"I beg of you not to speak of the business which has drawn me here. In the name of my father, whose life you have saved, my lord, I have the right to demand of you the cause of the despondency in which you are plunged. Your pallor, your sorrowful expression, frighten me. Speak, I beseech you, my lord! Speak! have compassion upon my anguish!"

"What relief can it afford? My woe is incurable!"

"Your words increase my alarm. I beg of you to speak, my lord. Sir Walter, inform me from what overwhelming calamity you suffer."

"Since I have informed you of the death of Fleur-de-Marie," said Rodolph, in a voice interrupted with sobs, "I have learned that she was my daughter."

"Fleur-de-Marie your daughter!" exclaimed the astonished Clémence, with an accent which the power of language is feeble to convey.

"Yes; and when but a moment since, you informed me that you wished instantly to see me, to impart to me news which would fill me with joy—pardon my weakness—but I am a father, distracted with grief at the loss of my child, and susceptible to the most delusive and unnatural hopes—for a moment I thought that—

but, no no—I see that I was deceived. Excuse me, I am wild with grief!"

Rodolph, exhausted by the disappointment of his hope, and the sudden vanishing of the illusion, which he had for a moment cherished, fell back upon his seat, hiding his face in his hands.

The marquise remained immoveable—silent, hardly breathing—by turns cherishing the most unbounded joy, and yielding to fear as to the effect of the overwhelming revelation in her power to make. Her soul rose into religious gratitude to Providence, that he had entrusted her—her, with the mission of announcing to Rodolph, that his daughter lived, and was restored to his arms. Agitated by emotions so deep, and so varied, Clémence could not utter a word. Murphy, who had for a moment shared the extravagant hope of the prince, was now, like him, plunged in despair. The marquise, yielding to a sudden impulse of her exalted and grateful soul, lost to the presence of Rodolph and Murphy, fell upon her knees, clasped her hands in prayer, and exclaimed, with an accent which holiness and gratitude alone can give to language: "Thanks to thee, O my God! for ever blessed be thy holy name. I recognise thy almighty will. I bless thee, for having selected me as an instrument of imparting to him that his daughter still lives."

Although breathed in a low voice, these words, uttered in a tone of sincerity and devout enthusiasm, reached the ears of Rodolph and Murphy. The prince lifted his head at the moment Clémence was rising from her knees. It is impossible to describe the expression of the father, while contemplating the countenance of the marquise, whose face, lighted with celestial joy, resembled the beauty of angels. Leaning with one hand upon the marble table, and repressing with the other the precipitate beatings of her heart, she replied to a look of Rodolph, which we renounce all hope of describing, by an affirmative motion of her head: "Below, in my carriage."

If Murphy had not thrown himself before the prince, the unhappy father would have rushed from the room.

"My lord, it might be the death of your child!" exclaimed the squire, restraining the prince. "Only yesterday, she left the sick room; as you value her life, no imprudence, my lord!"

"You are right," said Rodolph, scarcely restraining himself; "you are right, I will be calm; I will not see her until my first emotions have subsided—it is too overwhelming," added he, in a fainting voice. Then, addressing the marquise, and extending to her his hand, he said, with a burst of indescribable gratitude: "My pardon is sealed! You are the angel of my redemption!"

"My lord, you restored my father, and God has willed that I should restore your child," replied Clémence; "but, in my turn, I must beg your pardon for my weakness, for this sudden and unexpected revelation has overpowered me. I confess that I have not sufficient courage to introduce Fleur-de-Marie; my emotion would frighten her."

"And how was she saved? Who saved her?" exclaimed Rodolph. "Bear witness of my ingratitude; for I have not even asked those questions."

"She was drawn from the water by a courageous woman."

"Do you know her?"

"She will come to my house, to-morrow."

"My debt of obligation is immense; but I shall know how to repay it."

"What a blessed inspiration it was that warned me not to bring Fleur-de-Marie with me; the scene might have been fatal."

"It is true, madame; it was a providential interference, that she was not brought here."

"I knew not, whether my lord was desirous of disclosing his rank to her, and I did not wish to present her without consulting him."

"Now," said the prince, who had passed a few moments in subduing his agitation, and whose countenance appeared almost calm; "now I am master of myself, I assure you. Go, Murphy, and bring my daughter."

The words, "my daughter," were spoken in an accent impossible to convey.

"My lord, are you well assured of your own composure? No imprudence, I beg."

"Depend upon me; I know the danger, and would not expose her to it; but I beg of you, my good Murphy, to go—go."

"Have no fears, my lady," said Murphy, who had observed the prince; "my lord will now restrain himself."

"Then go; go quickly, my old friend."

"Yes, my lord; I only ask for a moment's delay; I am not made of iron myself," said the good squire, wiping the tears from his eyes; "she must not see that I have wept."

"Excellent man!" continued Rodolph, pressing the hand of Murphy in his own.

"Come, come, my lord, I am going; I did not wish to pass the antechamber, weeping like a Magdalen:" and the squire advanced towards the door; but again turning round, said: "But, my lord, what shall I tell her?"

"Yes, what shall he say to her?" asked the prince of Clémence.

"Tell her that only M. Rodolph desires to see her—nothing more."

"Certainly; M. Rodolph desires to see her—nothing more. Come, go!"

"It is precisely the best thing to say to her," said the squire, who was no less affected than the marquise. "I will merely say to her, that M. Rodolph desires to see her, and that will excite no suspicion. That is the most reasonable announcement:" and Murphy did not move.

"Sir Walter," said Clémence to him, smiling, "you are afraid."

"It is true, marquise, in spite of my six feet and stalwart form, I am still under the impression of deep emotion."

"Beware, my friend! delay for a moment longer, if you are not sure of yourself."

"I think I have now command of myself," said the squire, after having passed his brawny hands over his eyes: "at my age, such weakness is perfectly ridiculous. Fear nothing, my lord:" and Murphy left the room with a firm step and a calm face.

A moment of silence followed his departure. It was not until this moment, that Clémence reflected that she was at the house of Rodolph, and alone with him.

The prince now approached her, and said, almost with timidity: "If I select this day and this moment to make a sincere declaration of my love, it is because this day and this moment will add so much to the solemnity of the avowal. From the first time I saw you, I have loved you.

So long as it was necessary to conceal that love, I concealed it: now, you are free. You have restored to me my daughter—will you consent to become her mother?"

"I! my lord?" exclaimed the marquise.

"I entreat you not to refuse my request. It is in your power to signalise this day as the commencement of the happiness of my future life."

Clémence had, for a long time, loved the prince with ardour. The confession of Rodolph, so simple, so serious, so tender, uttered under circumstances which gave it so much solemnity, transported her with unexpected joy.

"It belongs to me, my lord, to remind you of the disparity of our rank, and the interests of your sovereignty."

"Allow me to think, before everything, of the interests of my heart and of my beloved daughter. Render us both happy, in order that I, who, a moment since, was without a family, may say, 'My wife—my daughter.' Accept, finally, that this poor child, who, a moment since, was as bereft as myself, may exclaim: 'My mother—my father—my sister!' for you have a daughter, who will be mine also."

"To such noble words, my lord, I can only respond with tears of gratitude," exclaimed Clémence; but, restraining her emotions, she suddenly added: "My lord, some one approaches—it is your daughter!"

"Do not refuse my petition," said Rodolph, in a supplicating tone; "in the name of my love, I beseech you to say *our* daughter!"

"Our daughter," murmured Clémence, as Murphy introduced Fleur-de-Marie into the presence of her father.

The young girl, having alighted from the carriage of the marquise, before the peristyle of that immense hotel, had passed through the first antechamber, filled with footmen in full livery—through the waiting-hall, where the *valets-de-chambre* where stationed—through the apartment assigned to the ushers—and finally, through the hall of service, occupied by the chamberlain and aid-de-camp of the prince, in full uniform. Let the reader imagine the astonishment of poor Goualeuse, who knew of no other splendours than those of the farm of Bouqueval, while passing through this princely suite, dazzling with gold, with paintings and mirrors. The moment she made her appearance, the marquise ran to her, took her by one hand, and, passing her arm around her, in order to support her form, she led her to Rodolph, who was standing by the fire-place, and unable to move.

Murphy, after having confided Fleur-de-Marie to the Marquise d'Harville, hastened to conceal himself partially behind one of the immense curtains of the window; not, by any means, sure that his composure was equal to the scene about to transpire. At the sight of her protector, her benefactor, her saviour, Fleur-de-Marie, already surprised and agitated, trembled violently.

"Have courage, my child," said the marquise to her; "here is your friend, M. Rodolph, who has been impatiently waiting for you; he has been extremely anxious on your account."

"Oh! yes, yes, very—very—anxious!" stammered Rodolph, immoveable, whose heart was almost breaking at the sight of the pale and mild countenance of his daughter. In spite of his resolution, and power of self-control, the prince was obliged to turn his head aside, to conceal his emotion.

"You are still very weak, my child; be seated, I pray you," said Clémence, in order to divert the attention of Fleur-de-Marie: and she conducted her to a large *fauteuil* of gilded wood, in which Goualeuse seated herself with precaution. Her agitation perceptibly increased; she was oppressed; her voice faltered—she was grieved that she could not speak a word of gratitude to Rodolph. Upon a signal from the marquise, who, leaning upon the *fauteuil*, was bending towards Fleur-de-Marie, holding one of her hands in her own, the prince gently approached upon the other side of the chair, and, having assumed all the control he could summon, he said to Fleur-de-Marie, who turned towards him her enchanting face: "At length, my child, you are for ever united to your friends; you never shall be separated from them again: and, above all, you must forget your past sufferings."

"Yes, my child; the best way to prove to us your love, is to forget that melancholy past."

"Believe me, M. Rodolph, believe me, madame—if the past occasionally recurs to my mind, it is for the purpose of saying, that without you, I should still be miserable."

"But we shall henceforth treat you in such a manner that you will no longer have those gloomy thoughts; our love will not leave you time, my dear Marie," said Rodolph; "for you know, I gave you that name at the farm."

"Yes, M. Rodolph: and is Madame Georges well, who allowed me to call her my mother—is she well?"

"Very well, my child; but I have important news to communicate to you."

"To me, M. Rodolph?"

"Since I last saw you, we have made important discoveries respecting your family."

"About my family?"

"We have discovered your parents; we know your father." Rodolph's voice was so affected in uttering these words, that Fleur-de-Marie, in great agitation, turned towards him. He was, fortunately, able to conceal his emotion.

A half-burlesque incident, abstracted also the attention of the child from the agitation of her father. The worthy squire, who was still in his place of concealment, pretending to examine attentively the garden of the hotel, was compelled to resort to his handkerchief, for he cried like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie!" exclaimed Clémence, "your father is known; he is still living."

"My father!" exclaimed Goualeuse, with an accent which subjected Rodolph's firmness to a new trial.

"And some day, very soon, perhaps, you will see him. What will doubtless astonish you is, that he is of exalted and of very noble family."

"And shall I see my mother?"

"Your father will answer that question, my child. Will you not be rejoiced to see him?"

"Oh, yes, madame!" responded Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him."

"From that a new life will commence; will it not be so, Marie?" added the prince.

"Oh, no, M. Rodolph!" replied Goualeuse, artlessly; "my new life commenced when you took pity upon me; when you removed me to the farm. I do not know him; but to you I owe everything, M. Rodolph."

"You love me then as much, perhaps more, than you would your father."

"I bless you, and respect you, as a superior being; for you have done for me what He only could do," replied Goualeuse, with enthusiasm, forgetting her habitual timidity. "When the marquise had the kindness to speak to me in prison, I told her the same; and I have told it to everybody. Yes! to those who were unhappy, I said: 'Hope! for M. Rodolph comforts the unfortunate!' To those who hesitated between good and evil, I said: 'Be virtuous! M. Rodolph rewards the virtuous!' To those who are wicked, I said: 'Beware! M. Rodolph punishes the wicked!' In short, when I was dying, I said to myself: 'God will have mercy upon me, for M. Rodolph has judged me worthy of his interest.'" Fleur-de-Marie, carried away by gratitude towards her benefactor, had overcome her fear; her cheeks were slightly flushed, and her beautiful blue eyes, which she raised to heaven, as if she had been in prayer, shone forth with the most angelic expression.

A silence of a few seconds succeeded this burst of Fleur-de-Marie's enthusiasm. The emotion of the actors of this scene was profound.

"I see, my child," said Rodolph, unable to suppress his joy, "that I have almost taken the place of your father, in your heart."

"It is not my fault, M. Rodolph; it is perhaps wrong in me; but I know you, and do not know my father;" and she added, bending her head in confusion: "*You* know the past, M. Rodolph, and have lavished your kindness upon me, notwithstanding; but my father is ignorant of the past; and he will, perhaps, regret having found me again," said the unfortunate child, shuddering. "And since, as the marquise says, he is of a noble family, he will undoubtedly be ashamed, and blush on account of me."

"Blush for you!" said Rodolph, raising his head, and assuming an air of pride and dignity. "Be assured, my dear child, your father will place you in a position so brilliant and exalted, that the greatest of the great will look upon you with the profoundest respect. Blush for you? never! After the queens to whom you are allied by blood, you will walk side by side with the noblest princesses of Europe."

"My lord!" exclaimed Clémence and Murphy, simultaneously, who were frightened at the increasing enthusiasm of Rodolph, and the paleness of Fleur-de-Marie, who looked towards her father in astonishment.

"Blush for you!" he continued; "if I was ever proud and pleased with my sovereign rank, it is, because it places it in my power to exalt you as high as you have been depressed. Do you hear, my beloved child! my adored daughter! It is I—it is I who am your father!" And the prince, unable longer to restrain his emotions, threw himself at the feet of Fleur-de-Marie, whom he covered with tears and caresses.

"Blessed be my God!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands, that I am permitted to love my benefactor with that singleness of heart with which I have ever loved him! He is my father. My soul can cherish him without remorse! Blessed be my ——"

She could not finish the sentence. The shock was too violent; and Fleur-de-Marie fainted in the arms of the prince.

Murphy hastened to the door of the room, opened it, and said: "Call for the physician of his royal highness. Some one is fainting."

"A curse upon me! I have killed her! I have killed her!" exclaimed Rodolph, sobbing and kneeling before his daughter. "Marie, Marie, my child, hear me. It is your father who speaks. Pardon me! Oh, pardon me! for being unable to hide the secret longer. Alas! I have killed her!"

"Be calm, my lord," said Clémence. "I presume that there is no danger. See, there is still colour in her cheek. It is excitement, merely."

"But scarcely recovered from sickness, the blow will kill her. Woe! woe to me!"

At this moment, David, the physician, entered, holding in his hands a case filled with *flacons*, and a paper which he gave to Murphy.

"David, my daughter is dying! I have saved your life; you must save my child's!" exclaimed Rodolph.

Stupefied at these words of the prince, the physician hastened to Fleur-de-Marie, whom the marquise held in her arms, felt the pulse of the young girl, placed his hand upon her forehead, and turning to Rodolph, who, pale and agitated, awaited his opinion, said: "There is no danger. Let your highness be reassured."

"Do you speak the truth? Is there no danger, whatever?"

"None, my lord. A few drops of ether will cure the attack."

"Thank you, David—my good David!" exclaimed the prince, with emotion, and addressing Clémence, added: "She lives! Our daughter will live!"

Murphy had just cast his eyes upon the paper which David had delivered. He shuddered, and looked at the prince with fear.

"Yes, my old friend," continued Rodolph, "in a short time my daughter will be able to say to the marquise: 'My mother.'"

"My lord," said Murphy, trembling, "the news of yesterday was false!"

"What do you say?"

"A violent fit, followed by syncope, imposed upon her friends the belief that the Countess Sarah was dead."

"The countess?"

"This morning, they hoped to be able to save her life."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed the prince, terrified; while Clémence, looking upon him in amazement, could not understand the cause of his emotion.

"My lord," said David, occupied with Fleur-de-Marie, "there is not the least danger; but she needs more air; the chair might be rolled out upon the terrace, and the door of the garden opened, when her faintness would be relieved."

Murphy hastened to open a door upon an immense gallery, which formed a terrace; and with the assistance of David, rolled gently the chair, in which the inanimate form of Fleur-de-Marie reposed.

Rodolph and Clémence were left alone.

"Alas! madame!" exclaimed Rodolph, the moment Murphy and David left the room, "you do not know who the Countess Sarah is — she is the mother of Fleur-de-Marie!"

"Good heaven!"

"And I thought she was dead."

A profound silence ensued.

The marquise became deadly pale; her heart was broken!

"You do not know, that this selfish and ambitious woman, attached to me only as a prince,

"I shall have time, I am confident. I pray you inform the prince that I wish to see him."

"My sister, I know not how to act. The expression of your countenance is ominous."

"Would you have me laugh? Do you suppose that gratified ambition displays itself in tears or laughter? Summon the prince, I beseech you."

Seyton was terrified, in spite of himself, at the composure of Sarah. He thought that he discovered in her eyes the moisture of restrained tears. After a moment's hesitation, he opened the door, which he did not close behind him, and left the room.

"Now," said Sarah, "if I can see and embrace my daughter, I shall be contented. The request will be difficult to obtain. Rodolph will refuse it as a punishment; but I must succeed. Here he comes."

Rodolph entered, and closed the door.

"Has your brother informed you of everything?" asked the prince, coolly, of Sarah.

"Everything."

"Is your ambition gratified?"

"It is gratified."

"The minister and the witnesses are in attendance."

"I know it."

"They may now be allowed to enter, I suppose?"

"One word, my lord."

"Speak, madame."

"I wish to see my daughter."

"It is impossible."

"I tell you, my lord, that I must see my daughter."

"She is hardly recovered from a violent shock which she experienced this morning, and another interview would prove fatal."

"She must, at least, embrace her mother!"

"For what purpose? You are now, in fact, a sovereign princess."

"I am not yet so, nor will I be, until I have embraced my daughter."

Rodolph looked at the countess with an expression of surprise and tenderness.

"How! will you postpone the gratification of your pride ——"

"To the gratification of maternal affection. It may surprise you, my lord."

"It does, indeed."

"Shall I see my daughter?"

"But ——"

"Beware, my lord! My moments are numbered! This last excitement may save, but it also may kill me. I am gathering all my strength —all my energy—and I need much, to struggle against the emotions produced by such a development. I wish to see my daughter, and upon no other condition will I accept your hand; and if I should die, her birth can never be legitimated."

"Fleur-de-Marie is not here, and it would be necessary to send for her to my house."

"Send for her instantly, and I consent to everything! my seconds are already numbered, as I have told you; the marriage can be celebrated while Fleur-de-Marie is on her way."

"Although this sentiment astonishes me, it is too praiseworthy to be disregarded. You shall see Fleur-de-Marie; I will write to her."

"There, on that table, at which I was stabbed."

While Rodolph was hastily writing a few lines, the countess wiped the cold perspiration from her brow. Her countenance which, until this moment, had been calm, now betrayed violent and concealed agony. It appeared that Sarah, in ceasing to restrain her feelings, was reposing from a painful dissimulation. Rodolph, having finished writing, arose, and said to the countess: "I will send this letter to my daughter, by the hands of one of my aids; she will be here within half an hour. May I now introduce the minister and the witnesses?"

"You may do so, or rather, I beseech you to ring. Do not leave me alone. Charge Sir Walter with the commission; he will introduce the minister and the witnesses."

Rodolph rang the bell, and one of Sarah's maids appeared.

"Ask my brother to send here Sir Walter Murphy," said the countess.

The maid left the room.

"This is a sad union, Rodolph," said the countess, bitterly; "sad to me; for you it will be happy."

The prince started.

"It will be happy for you, for the bride will not survive it."

At that moment, Murphy entered.

"My friend," said Rodolph, "dispatch this letter instantly to my daughter, by the colonel; he will return with her in my carriage. Ask the minister and the witnesses to enter the adjoining room."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Sarah, in a suppliant tone, when Murphy had disappeared, "grant that I may have strength enough to see her! let me not die before I have embraced her!"

"Why have you not always cherished this maternal tenderness?"

"Thanks to you! I am now acquainted with repentance, devotion, and self-denial. Yes; when, a moment since, my brother informed me that our daughter was living—allow me to call her *our* daughter, for I shall not use that word long—I felt a terrible pain at my heart; it was the stroke of death! I concealed it, but I was happy. The birth of our child will be legitimated, and I shall die."

"Do not speak thus."

"I do not deceive you *now;* you will see."

"What! is there not a remnant of that implacable ambition which has ruined you? Why has fate willed that your repentance should come so late?"

"It is late, but profound, sincere; I swear it to you. If, at this solemn moment, I bless God for removing me from this world, it is because my life would have been a burden to you."

"I beseech you, Sarah ——"

"Rodolph, one last request—your hand."

The prince, turning his eyes aside, gave it to the countess, who quickly took it in hers.

"Your hands are cold!" exclaimed Rodolph, with a shudder.

"Yes, I feel that I am dying! Perhaps, as a final punishment, God will not allow me to embrace my daughter!"

"Oh, yes, yes! his compassion will be moved by your remorse."

"And are not you moved by it, my friend? I beseech you to say that you forgive me! You will not be able to pardon me in the presence of our daughter; it would be to inform her of the guilt of her mother, and that you will never do. When I am in the world of spirits, her love for her mother will be no injury to you."

"Be comforted; she shall know nothing of it."

"Pardon me! pardon me, Rodolph! will you be pitiless? Am I not sufficiently punished?"

"May God pardon the evil you have done to your child, as I pardon that which you have done to me."

"Do you forgive me in the sincerity of your heart?"

"With all my heart!" said the prince, with emotion.

The countess eagerly pressed the hand of the prince to her lips, with an impulse of joy and gratitude, and then said: "Ask the minister to come in, and request him not to leave, for I am conscious that I am about to die."

The scene was distressing. Rodolph opened the door; the minister entered, followed by Murphy and Baron de Graün, witnesses of Rodolph, and the Duke de Lucenay, and Lord Douglas, witnesses on the part of the countess, accompanied by Thomas Seyton. All the actors of the painful scene were melancholy and thoughtful. The Duke de Lucenay had forgotten his habitual eccentricity.

The contract of marriage between the high and puissant prince, his Royal Highness, Gustavus Rodolph the Fifth, reigning Duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, Countess of Macgregor (a contract to legitimate the birth of Fleur-de-Marie), had been prepared by Baron de Graün, and having been read by him, was signed by the parties and their witnesses.

In spite of the repentance of the countess, when the minister said to Rodolph, in a loud and solemn voice: "Does your Royal Highness consent to take as your wife, Madame Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, Countess of Macgregor?" and the prince replied, "Yes," in a firm voice, the dying eye of Sarah sparkled with unnatural brilliancy; a rapid and fleeting expression of triumph passed over her features. It was the last ray of that ambition which was expiring with her.

During this sad and imposing ceremony, not a word was exchanged between those who were present; and when it was concluded, Lord Douglas and the Duke de Lucenay approached the prince in silence, bowed respectfully, and left the room.

"My brother," said Sarah, in a low voice, "ask the minister to accompany you into the next room, and to be kind enough to wait there for a moment."

"You are very pale, my sister."

"I am now sure to live! Am I not Grand Duchess of Gerolstein?" added she, with a bitter smile.

"Left alone with the prince!" she muttered in an exhausted voice, while all expression was fading from her features. "My strength is wasting away! I feel that I am dying! I shall not see her!"

"Yes, yes! Take courage, Sarah; that boon will not be denied to you."

"I have lost all hope — all self-control. I required supernatural strength. My sight is already dim!"

"Sarah!" said the prince, approaching the countess, and taking her hand, "she is coming now; she will soon be here."

"God will not grant me this final consolation!"

"Listen, Sarah! I hear a carriage. Yes; your daughter is here!"

The noise of a carriage was heard on the pavement of the yard.

The countess did not perceive it; her words became more and more incoherent. Rodolph, leaning towards her with anxiety, saw a film falling upon her eyes.

"Pardon! my daughter—to see her—pardon—at least—after my death—the honours of my rank," she finally murmured. Such were the last intelligible words of Sarah—the fixed and governing idea of her life, was her last thought in death, notwithstanding her sincere repentance.

Murphy suddenly entered: "My lord, the Princess Marie."

"No! let her not come in!" exclaimed Rodolph, quickly. "Let Seyton attend with the minister." And then, pointing to Sarah, who was in the agonies of dissolution: "God has refused to her the consolation of embracing her child."

Within half an hour, the Countess Sarah Magregor had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XIV.

BICETRE.

A FORTNIGHT had now elapsed since Rodolph, by marrying Sarah, had legitimated the birth of Fleur-de-Marie. It was the day of Mid-Lent, and we will now conduct the reader to Bicêtre, an immense establishment, as every one knows, designed as a retreat for the insane; and serving also as an asylum for seven or eight hundred poor old men, who are admitted to that house of civil invalids, when they have reached the age of seventy, or have been struck with serious infirmities. Upon arriving at Bicêtre, you enter a large yard, planted with trees, and ornamented, here and there, with beds of flowers. Nothing is more agreeable and salubrious than the grounds destined as a place of recreation for the aged invalids to whom we have alluded. The yard surrounds the building, which, upon the second floor, contains spacious dormitories, well ventilated and furnished with comfortable beds. On the first floor, there are dining-rooms, unexceptionably neat, where the inmates of Bicetre partake, in common, of a healthy, abundant, and agreeable diet, prepared with the greatest care, owing to the parental solicitude of the directors of that excellent establishment. Such an asylum would realise the dream of the widower or bachelor artisan, who, after a long life of patient industry, and resigned privations, would find there the repose which he never enjoyed before. Unfortunately, that favouritism which extends to every institution of public charity, has taken possession of the administration of Bicêtre; and the majority of those who enjoy its benefaction, are servants, who are indebted, for their asylum, to the influence of their former masters. To us this seems a great abuse of a public charity. Nothing is more meritorious than long and honest domestic services; no one is more worthy of recompense than those menials who have been tested by long years of devotion, and who were formerly regarded as a part of the family. But, however praiseworthy such services may be, it belongs to the master, who has profited by them, and not to the state, to provide a suitable remuneration. Would it not, then, be just, moral, and humane, that the admittance to Bicêtre and other similar establishments, should belong to those artisans who could present proof of the most upright conduct, and the greatest misfortune? However limited the number of those unfortunates may be, these retreats would be a

distant hope, which would alleviate their fatigue and daily misery—a salutary hope which would encourage them in the path of virtue, by holding up before them the prospect of future comfort, certain, although far removed; and also afford them some tranquillity, some recompense. As they could not gain admittance into such an asylum, if their conduct were not irreproachable, good morals would become almost obligatory upon them. Is it, then, too much to demand, that labourers, who reach such an advanced age, through privations of every kind, should, at least, have the chance of securing, at Bicêtre, bread, repose, and shelter for their exhausted old age? Such a measure might henceforth exclude from that establishment, the literary, the learned, and the artist, who have, in declining years, no other refuge. It is a melancholy fact that, in our own day, men of science and intelligence, who have been celebrated for their talents, secure, with great difficulty, a place among those old servants whom the influence of their masters provides with a resting-place in Bicêtre. In the name of those who have contributed to the renown and happiness of France —of those whose reputation has been established by popular approbation, may we not invoke an honourable retreat for their declining years? Is it too much to ask? Let us, however, cite one instance out of a thousand. Eight or ten millions have been spent to rear the Madeleine, which is neither a temple nor a church. With that enormous sum, how much good might have been accomplished! A retreat might have been established, where two hundred and fifty, or three hundred persons, once distinguished as men of learning, poets, or musicians, civil officers, physicians, lawyers, &c. &c.—for almost all these professions have their representatives in Bicêtre—might have been provided with the comforts and necessaries of life. This would have been a project worthy of philanthropy and national dignity, in a country which professes to take the lead in intelligence, the arts, and civilisation. But such a scheme did not enter into the imagination of men. Hégésippe Moreau, and many other rare sons of genius, died in the hospitals, or from want. Men of elevated intelligence, from whose lips formerly fell sparkles of wit and poetry, now wear, at Bicêtre, the livery of the poor; for there is not in this city, as in London, an hospital, where strangers without resources can find, at least for one night, a shelter, a bed, and a morsel of food. The labourers who resort to the quays in search of work, have not even a roof to protect them from the inclemency of the season, while waiting for employment, not even a shed, which, in the market-place, protects the cattle exposed to sale; and yet the quays are a sort of exchange for labourers without work; and, in that exchange, nothing but honest transactions are conducted. The object of the assemblage is to obtain hard work, and wages insufficient to provide the artisan with bitter bread. But there would be no end to the suggestions, if we wished to name all the charitable establishments which have been sacrificed to that grotesque design of a Grecian temple, destined, finally, to Catholic worship.

We must, however, return to Bicêtre, and enumerate the different purposes which that establishment served.

At the time of this narrative, those condemned to death were conducted there after their sentence. It was then, in one of the cells of this house that the Widow Martial and her daughter were awaiting the moment of their execution, which was to take place on the morrow. Neither the mother nor the daughter deigned to supplicate a pardon, or to request an appeal.

Nicholas, Squelette, and several other wretches, succeeded in escaping from La Force, the day before they were to be transferred to Bicêtre.

As we have already said, nothing was more pleasant than the approach to this prison from Paris, where the yard was entered, designed for the poor. The elms and linden-trees were already covered with the green buds of an early spring. The grass was extremely verdant, and the beds were covered with the flowers of the season—crocuses, primroses, and the bright and variegated auriculas. The sun gilded the sand of the pathways; the old pensioners, clothed in their grey uniform, were promenading up and down the walks, or conversing with each other, seated on the benches—their countenances were tranquil, quiet, or indifferent. Eleven o'clock had just struck, when two carriages drew up before the exterior gate. Madame Georges, Germain, and Rigolette alighted from the first; Louise Morel and her mother, from the second.

Germain and Rigolette had been a fortnight married. We leave the reader to imagine the petulant gaiety, the noisy happiness, which sparkled in the actions of the grisette, who only opened her lips to laugh, smile, or kiss Madame Georges, whom she called her mother.

The features of Germain expressed a more calm and subdued felicity, in which an expression of gratitude and respect was mingled, for the excellent and courageous girl, who, while he was in prison, had lavished upon him such kind and agreeable consolation. Of all this, however, Rigolette was perfectly oblivious; and as soon as Germain began to converse upon the subject, she immediately suggested some other topic, pretending that those recollections made her melancholy. Although she was now Madame Germain, with a dowry of forty thousand francs, the munificent gift of the prince, Rigolette was unwilling to exchange the cap of the grisette for the bonnet of the matron, and her husband approved of her choice. Never was humility a better auxiliary of innocent coquetry; for nothing was more graceful and charming than her small cap, with a flat border, somewhat in the peasant's fashion, and trimmed on each side with two orange-coloured bows, which suited so well the jet-black of her hair, that now fell down in curls. A collar, beautifully embroidered, encircled the lovely neck of the young bride. A scarf of French cashmere, of the same colour with the ribbons on her cap, concealed partly her trim and chiselled waist; and although she had abjured corsets, though she had now time to lace herself, there was no wrinkle in her dress of taffeta, which sat close to her tender form, like that of the marble Galatea.

Madame Georges' countenance beamed with happiness, as she gazed upon her children.

Louise Morel, after a vigilant inquiry into the merits of the case, had been released by the Chamber of Accusation. The fine face of the daughter of the lapidary, marked by the lines of grief, announced sad and patient resignation. Thanks to the generosity of Rodolph, and to the cares lavished upon her, the mother of Louise had recovered her health.

The keeper of the exterior door respectfully asked Madame Georges the object of her visit.

She replied: "That she, as well as the persons that accompanied her, had made an appointment with one of the physicians of the insane, at half-past eleven."

Madame Georges was requested to wait for the physician, either in an office which was pointed out to her, or in the large yard which we have already described. She passed into the yard, leaning upon the arm of her son; and, continuing her conversation with the wife of the lapidary, walked in the paths of the garden. Louise and Rigolette followed a short distance behind them.

"How happy am I to meet you again, dear Louise!" said the grisette. "When we went to search for you in the Rue du Temple, this morning, after coming from Bouqueval, I wished to go up to your room; but my husband would not permit me, saying that it was too high, and I was obliged to wait for you in the carriage. Your vehicle followed ours, and I now see you for the first time since ——"

"Since you came to console me in prison. Ah! Mademoiselle Rigolette," exclaimed Louise, "what ——"

"In the first place," said the grisette, gaily, interrupting the daughter of the lapidary, in order to escape her thanks, "I am no longer Mademoiselle Rigolette, but Madame Germain. I know not whether you are acquainted with the fact; but I insist upon my titles."

"Yes, I knew that you were married; but allow me to thank you for ——"

"But what you do not know, my good Louise," said Madame Germain, interrupting again the daughter of Morel, in order to change the current of her thoughts—"what you do not know is, that I was married, thanks to the generosity of him who has been a minister of Providence to us all—to you and your friends, to me, to Germain, and his mother."

"M. Rodolph? we daily bless his name! When I left the prison, the lawyer whom he sent to advise and encourage me, told me that, thanks to M. Rodolph, who had already done so much for us, M. Ferrand"—and the poor girl could not speak the name without a shudder—"that M. Ferrand, to redeem his injuries, had settled an annuity upon me and my poor father, who is still here, but who is daily recovering."

"And who will return with you to-day, to Paris, if the opinion of that worthy physician is well founded."

"May it please heaven!"

"It *will* please heaven—your father is so good and so honest; and I am sure that he will be able to return with us. The physician thinks that the unforeseen presence of those persons whom your father daily saw before losing his reason, may completely restore it. In my humble judgment it appears certain."

"I dare not yet believe it, mademoiselle."

"Madame Germain, if it is the same to you, my good Louise. But to return to what I was saying: "Do you know who M. Rodolph actually is?"

"He is a Providence to the poor!"

"Certainly; but do you not know what he is besides? Well, I will tell you:" and addressing her husband, who was walking before her with Madame Georges upon his arm, and conversing with the wife of the lapidary, Rigolette exclaimed: "Don't walk so fast, my dear; you will fatigue our good mother. Besides, I wish to have you nearer to me."

Germain turned his head, moderated his pace, and smiled on Rigolette, who stealthily sent him a kiss.

"What an excellent little fellow my Germain is! don't you think so, Louise? And with all that, he has such a *distingué* air, such a genteel form! Was I not right in preferring him to my other neighbours, M. Giraudeau and M. Cabrion? By the way, speaking of Cabrion, how is M. Pipelet and his wife? the physician said they must come here also, for your father has often pronounced their names."

"They will soon be here; for when I left the house, they had already started."

"They will not fail to arrive; M. Pipelet is as punctual as a clock."

Rigolette continued: "But let us return to my marriage, and to M. Rodolph. Only imagine, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order to Germain, that opened his prison doors to him. You will conceive our joy in coming out of that hateful jail! We got to my lodgings, and there, assisted by Germain, I prepared a little dinner—such an elegant little dinner! It is true, that it was not to much purpose; for, after it was cooked, we could neither of us eat a bit—we were too happy for that. At eleven o'clock, Germain went away; but we appointed to meet next morning. At five o'clock, I was up, and at work; for I was at least two days behindhand. At eight o'clock, some one knocked at my door. I opened it. Who do you suppose came in? M. Rodolph. At first, I began thanking him, and from the bottom of my heart, for what he had done for Germain; he would not allow me to go on. 'My neighbour,' said he to me, 'Germain will soon be here. You will deliver this letter to him. You and he will take a hackney-coach; you will go directly to a small village called Bouqueval, near Ecouen, on the Saint-Denis road. When you arrive there, you will ask for Madame Georges.' 'With much pleasure, M. Rodolph; though I must tell you, I shall lose another day; and, without meaning to complain, that will make three days I have lost!' 'Do not make yourself uneasy, my neighbour; you will have plenty of work at Madame Georges'. You will find that I have given you an excellent customer in her.' 'Oh! that's quite another thing, M. Rodolph! I shall be very glad of it!' 'Well, good day, neighbour!' 'Good day, and many thanks, neighbour!' He went away, and Germain soon came in. I told him what had passed. M. Rodolph was incapable of deceiving us. We got into a coach, as merry as larks. We, who had been so sorrowful the morning before—only think, what a change! We arrived at the place he told us to go to. Ah! my dear Louise, who would have imagined it? In spite of myself, the tears will come into my eyes. This Madame Georges, who is now before us, is the mother of Germain!"

"His mother?"

"Yes—assuredly—his mother, from whom he had been carried off when quite a child, and whom she never expected to see again. You can imagine what delight they both felt. When Madame Georges had kissed her son, again and again, weeping all the time with joy, then came my turn. M. Rodolph had, undoubtedly, written many good things about me; for she told me, folding her arms around me, that she had heard of my conduct towards her son. 'And if you will permit it, my dear mother,' said Germain, 'Rigolette will be your daughter too!'

'If I will permit it! my children—and with all my heart too. I am quite sure that you can never find a better, or a prettier little wife.' Here we are, then, regularly settled, on an excellent farm, with Germain, his mother, and my little birds, which I had sent for, that they might also be of the party—poor little things. Although I do not like the country, the days passed so quietly, that it was like a dream. I worked only for my own amusement. I assisted Madame Georges—I walked about with Germain; I sang; I jumped—oh! I was almost crazy with happiness. And, finally, our wedding-day was fixed, and we were to be married a fortnight ago. Two days before that, a handsome carriage drove up to the door, and a fine, tall, stout, bald-headed gentleman, with a most pleasing countenance, got out of it, who brought me, from M. Rodolph, a wedding present. Figure to yourself a beautiful, large rosewood coffer, on the lid of which, inlaid upon blue porcelain, were these words, in letters of gold: *Labour and prudence, honour and happiness.* I opened the box; what did I find there? Some small lace caps, such as I am now wearing; several pieces for gowns, some jewellery, gloves, this scarf, a beautiful shawl—in fine, it was just like a fairy tale."

"'Tis true, it is for all the world like a fairy tale; but see what happiness it has brought you, to be so good and so industrious!"

"As to being good and industrious, my dear Louise, that is no merit of mine. I am as God made me—so much the happier for me!—But this was not all: at the bottom of the coffer I found a pretty pocket-book, on which was inscribed: '*The neighbour to his neighbour.*' I opened it. There were two envelopes in it—the one for Germain, the other for myself. In the one for Germain he found a paper, by which he was appointed director of a bank for the poor, with a salary of four thousand francs; in the envelope addressed to me, I found a certificate for forty thousand francs upon the royal treasury. Yes, that's the name. This was my marriage portion. I wished not to accept it; but Madame Georges, who had been talking with the tall, bald-headed gentleman, and with Germain, said to me: 'My child, you can, you ought to accept this gift; it is the reward of your prudence, of your industry, and of your devotion to those who are unfortunate: for it was by depriving yourself of many hours of rest, at the risk of endangering your health, and of thus losing your only means of existence, that you could devote a portion of your time to visiting your friends who were in affliction, and console them.'"

"Oh! that's quite true!" exclaimed Louise; "there is not another who can equal you for that, at least, Madame Germain."

"Well, I told the tall, bald-headed gentleman, that what I had done was for my own satisfaction. He replied: 'That's no matter. M. Rodolph is immensely rich. Your marriage portion is merely, on his part, a pledge of his esteem and friendship. Your refusal would only give him pain; and, besides which, he will be present at your wedding, and then he would certainly oblige you to accept it.'"

"How fortunate, that so much wealth should have fallen to the lot of so charitable a person as M. Rodolph," said Louise.

"No doubt he is very rich; but if he were only that; ah! my good Louise, if you only knew what M. Rodolph is! and I made him carry my parcels! But patience, and I will tell you more. The evening before my marriage, and very late, the tall, bald-headed gentleman arrived again, with post-horses. M. Rodolph could not come—he had been taken ill—but the tall gentleman came instead of him. It was only at that moment, my good Louise, that we learned that your benefactor, and ours, was—guess what! A prince!"

"A prince?"

"What do I say? A prince—a royal highness—a reigning grand-duke—a little king! Germain explained that to me."

"M. Rodolph ——"

"Ah! Louise; and I, who had asked him to help me wax my floor!"

"A prince! almost a king! That is the reason why he has so much power to do good."

"You will understand the confusion I was in. And so, when I found that he was almost a king, I did not dare refuse the marriage portion. We were married. About a week ago, M. Rodolph sent to tell us—we two Germains and Madame Georges—that he would be glad if we would pay him a wedding visit. We went to Paris; you will judge how my heart beat; we arrived at the Rue Plumêt; we entered a large palace; we passed through several halls, filled with servants all covered with gold lace—gentlemen in black, with silver chains about their necks, and long swords at their sides—officers in uniform, and I know not what; and then so much gilding! so much gilding all around, that it quite dazzled me. At last we found the bald-headed gentleman, in a room with other persons, all bedizened with embroidery. He introduced us into a large saloon, where we found M. Rodolph—that is to say, the prince—dressed very plainly, and with so good, so frank, so affable an air—in fine, so much *the air of Rodolph of old times*, that I immediately felt perfectly at my ease; particularly when I recollected his putting on my shawl, mending my pens, and giving me his arm in the street."

"You did not feel afraid? Oh! how I should have trembled."

"Well, I did not. After having received Madame Georges with unequalled kindness, and giving his hand to Germain, the prince said to me, smiling: 'Well, my neighbour, how is Father Crêtu and Ramonette?'—these are the names of my birds; was it not amiable in him to remember them? 'I am quite sure,' added he, 'that you and Germain try whether you can't sing as merrily as your birds.' 'Yes, my lord—Madame Georges had been giving us a lesson all the way, telling us we must call the prince my lord—' yes, my lord, our happiness is great, and it seems greater and sweeter still to us, because it is to you we owe it.' 'Tis not to me that you are indebted for it, my child, but to your own and Germain's excellent qualities, &c., &c. I pass over the remainder of his compliments. At last we left this great prince, with heavy hearts, for we shall never see him more. He told us he intended returning to Germany in a few days; perhaps he is already gone; but gone or not, his remembrance will always remain with us."

"As he has subjects, they must be very happy!"

"It must be so—he has done so much good to us, who are nothing to him. I forgot to tell

you, that it was on this farm that one of my former companions in the prison had some time resided—a very good and worthy little girl, who, by good fortune, had also met with M. Rodolph; but Madame Georges had particularly desired me not to speak to the prince about her. I don't know why."

"Doubtless, because he does not like that any one should speak to him of the good he has done."

"That which appears certain, is, that the dear Goualeuse has found her relations, who have taken her with them, far, far off. All that I regret is, not to have embraced her before she went away."

"Come! come! so much the better," said Louise, bitterly; "she is happy, too."

"Pardon! my good Louise; I am too selfish, that is true. I only speak to you of happiness—and you have so much cause to be still unhappy!"

"If my child had but lived," said Louise, mournfully, "that would have consoled me; for what worthy man would have me now, although I have some property?"

"I say, on the contrary, Louise, that it is only a worthy man who would be capable of comprehending your position. When he shall know all—when he shall know you—he could only pity and esteem you; and he would be assured of finding in you a good and worthy wife."

"You say this to console me."

No! I say it because it is the truth."

"Well! whether true or not, it does me good to hear it, and I thank you for it;—but, who is coming here? Only look! 'tis M. Pipelet and his wife! Dear me! how revived he looks! he who lately was so unhappy, on account of the tricks played upon him by M. Cabrion!"

And so, in fact, it was. M. and Madame Pipelet were advancing, gaily—Alfred, still wearing his immoveable, drum-like hat, dressed in a magnificent pea-green coat, in its first lustre—his cravat, embroidered at the corners, gave place to his formidable shirt-collar, which covered half his cheeks—a large waistcoat, the ground of which was yellow, with chesnut-coloured stripes—a pair of black pantaloons, rather short—stockings of dazzling whiteness—and shoes, fresh varnished—completed his equipment.

Anastasie was sailing pompously along, in an ample gown, of amarinth merino, which contrasted boldly with a sky-blue shawl. She was proudly exposing to the public gaze her freshly curled wig, and carried her cap, hanging by its green ribbons, on her arm as a reticule.

The physiognomy of Alfred—usually so grave, so reflective, and, latterly, so care-worn—was absolutely beaming with joy and happiness. Immediately on his perceiving Louise and Rigolette, though still at a distance from them, he set out running, and cried out, with all the force of his bass voice: "Delivered! gone!"

"Dear me! M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, "how joyous you appear! What can have happened to you?"

"He is gone! mademoiselle; or rather *madame*—may I, can I, ought I to say?—for now you are precisely in the position of Anastasie, thanks to the *conjugo*—as your husband, M. Germain, is precisely in the same position as myself."

"You are very polite, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, smiling; "but, tell me, who is gone?"

"Cabrion!" cried M. Pipelet, inhaling and exhaling the air with indescribable satisfaction, as though relieved from an enormous weight. "He leaves France never to return—for ever—in perpetuity—in fine, he is gone."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"I saw him yesterday, with my own eyes, ascend into a diligence, going on the Strasburg road; he and all his baggage—his portable effects, that is to say, a hat-case, his painting-stick, and a box of colours."

"What is the old dear saying to you, there?" said Anastasie, arriving out of breath, having with difficulty followed the precipitate steps of Alfred; "I would lay a wager he was telling you of Cabrion's departure; he did nothing all the way but talk of it."

"I tell you, Anastasie, that I no longer walk upon the earth; I seem to float in the air. Before this happened, it seemed to me that my hat was lined with lead, and now, it would appear the air raises me towards the firmament! Gone at last!—gone!—and he will never come back!"

"Happily, he's gone—the scoundrel!"

"Anastasie! be merciful to the absent—happiness makes me charitable! I will only say, that he was an infamous blackguard!"

"And how did you know that he was going to Germany?" asked Rigolette.

"By a friend of my king of tenants. But, speaking of that dear man—thanks to the good character he gave us—Alfred is appointed porter and keeper of a loan office and charitable bank, founded in our house by a good soul, to whom, it appears to me, M. Rodolph was the travelling clerk to do good actions."

"This happens fortunately," rejoined Rigolette, "for my husband is the director of that bank, also through the good offices of M. Rodolph."

"Well! only think!" gaily cried Madame Pipelet. "So much the better!—old faces are more agreeable than new ones. But let us return to Cabrion. Imagine, then, that a tall, stout, bald-headed gentleman, when he came to apprise us of the appointment of Alfred as keeper, asked us whether a painter of considerable talent, named Cabrion, had not lodged in our house. At the name of Cabrion, my poor old dear there, raises his boots in the air, and almost faints away. Fortunately, the stout bald-head adds: 'This young painter is about to set out for Germany—a rich person takes him there to execute some work which will detain him several years, and perhaps he may establish himself altogether in that foreign country.' In testimony of which, this gentleman gave my old dear the address of the diligence office from which Cabrion was to start, and the date of his departure."

"And I had the unhoped-for happiness to read in the register of the diligence office—'M. Cabrion, painter, departs for Strasburg, and foreign countries.' The departure was fixed for this morning; I therefore repaired to the court-yard with my wife——"

"We saw the scoundrel mount on the coach-roof, alongside the conductor."

"And, finally, at the moment when the diligence was moving off, Cabrion perceived me, recognised me, turned round, and cried out: 'I am off for ever!—yours, while life lasts!' Fortunately, the conductor's horn almost drowned these last words, and his indecent familiarity,

which I despise. But, at last, thanks be to God, he is gone!"

"And gone for ever, be assured," said Rigolette, with difficulty restraining her violent inclination to laugh; "but what you do not know, and what will very much astonish you, is, that M. Rodolph was ——"

"Was what?"

"A disguised prince! a royal highness!"

"Oh! bah! what a farce is this!" said Anastasie.

"I swear it, by my husband," said Rigolette, very seriously.

"My king of tenants a royal highness!" exclaimed Anastasie; "and I asked him to take care of my lodge! Pardon! pardon! pardon!" and, saying this, she mechanically put on her cap, as if that head-dress were more suitable, when speaking of a prince.

By a manifestation directly opposed to this, in point of form, but precisely similar as to motive, Alfred, contrary to his usual custom, hastily took off his hat, and, profoundly bowing to the vacant air, cried: "A prince! a royal highness in our lodge! and he saw me stretched between my sheets, when I took to my bed, in consequence of the indignities showered upon me by this Cabrion!"

At this moment, Madame Georges turned round, and said to her son and Rigolette: "My children, here is the doctor."

Doctor Herbin was a man of middle age, with a very intelligent and noble countenance; his look was penetrating, and gave evidence of great sagacity, and his smile was peculiarly winning. His naturally harmonious voice became almost affectionate, when addressing insane patients; and, therefore, the suavity of his accent, the gentleness of his words, often appeared to calm the natural irritability of these afflicted beings. He was among the first of those who had the care of insane persons, to substitute commiseration and kindness, to the dreadfully coercive measures which were formerly employed. He abolished chains, and blows, and cold immersions, and above all, solitary confinement, excepting in some peculiar cases.

His superior intelligence had clearly seen, that monomania, insanity, and furious madness, could only be increased by brutal treatment, and by isolation; and that, on the contrary, by making insane persons mix, as it were, in common life, they would find numberless incidents, which would divert their attention, and prevent them from being absorbed by one fixed idea, which becomes the more fatal, as it becomes more concentrated by solitude and intimidation.

There is no doubt, that, in a few years hence, the present penitentiary system, with its prisons, where all classes are pent up together—and which, in fact, are so many schools for infamy—with its frightful galleys, its chains, its pillories, and its scaffolds, will appear to us as vicious, barbarous, and atrocious, as our former mode of treating insane persons now seems to us cruel and absurd.

* * *

"Sir," said Madame Georges, addressing Doctor Herbin, "I thought I might be permitted to accompany my son and my daughter-in-law, although I am not acquainted with M. Morel: the position of this excellent man appeared so interesting to me, that I could not resist my desire of being present with my children, to witness his complete return to reason. I understood, sir, that you anticipated this would be the result of the trial which you are about to submit him to?"

"I think much, madame, may be effected by the presence of his daughter, and of persons he was in the habit of seeing."

"When they came to arrest my husband," said Madame Morel, pointing out Rigolette to the doctor, "our good little neighbour, here, was occupied in affording assistance to me and to my children."

"My father was also well acquainted with M. Germain, who has always shown great kindness towards us," added Louise; and then presenting Alfred and Anastasie: "M. and Madame Pipelet are the door-keepers of our house—they also assisted our family, during its misfortunes, as much as they were able."

"I thank you, sir," said the doctor to Alfred, "for having taken the trouble to come so far; but, after what I have heard, I feel assured you will not consider this visit inconvenient to you."

"Sir," said M. Pipelet, bowing very solemnly, "men should assist each other in this world—we are brethren. Without considering that M. Morel was, as I may say, the cream of honest men, before he lost his reason, in consequence of his arrest, and that of this dear Mademoiselle Louise."

"And," rejoined Anastasie, "I still regret that the soup I threw over the backs of those vile bailiffs, was not boiling lead ——"

"'Tis true; I must render this just homage to the affection which my wife has always borne to the Morel family!"

"If you do not fear," said Doctor Herbin to Madame Georges, "the sight of deranged persons, we will pass through several of the yards, on our way to the exterior building, where I have thought it best to have Morel conducted; for I gave orders, this morning, that he should not be taken to the farm, as usual."

"To the farm, sir! Is there a farm here?"

"I conceive, madame, that this must surprise you. Yes, we have a farm here, the produce of which is a great resource to the house, and which is cultivated by insane people."*

"Are they at liberty when they work there?"

"Undoubtedly; and their labour, the serenity of the fields, the sight of nature, is one of our best modes of cure. One keeper, only, conducts them there; and there has been hardly one single instance of attempt at escape; they go there with perfect satisfaction, and the small wages they earn serves to meliorate their condition, and procures them little luxuries. But we have now arrived at the gate of one of the yards." And then, perceiving a slight look of apprehension on the features of Madame Georges, the doctor added: "Do not be alarmed, madame; in a few minutes, you will feel quite as calm as I do."

"I will follow you, sir—come, my children."

"Anastasie," whispered M. Pipelet, who had remained with her, some little distance behind the others, "when I think that if the demoniacal persecutions of Cabrion had continued, your Alfred would have gone mad, and, as such, might have been confined among these unfortunate wretches whom we are about to contemplate, in the most grotesque costumes, chains

* This farm—an admirable institution—is at a very short distance from Bicetre.

fastened to their waists, or shut up in iron cages, like the ferocious animals at the Jardin des Plantes ——"

"Don't say a word about it to me, my old dear: they say that men who have become mad from love, are like real monkeys—the moment that they see a woman, they rush to the bars of their cage, uttering the most frightful cooings, and their keepers are obliged to cool them by flogging them with heavy whips, and letting flow upon their heads streams of iced water, which fall from a height of at least a hundred feet; and even that is not enough to cool them down."

"Anastasie," said Alfred, very gravely, "do not go too near the cages of these mad people—an accident soon happens."

"It would not be generous in me, either, to appear to irritate them; for, after all," added Anastasie, in a melancholy tone, "our charms are the cause which has brought them to this. But hark you, Alfred; I tremble when I think, that had I refused you the happiness of becoming mine, you might, at this very moment, have been as mad from love as any of these infuriated beings; and that you, poor dear, might have clung to the gratings of your cage, and have roared out after every woman—you, who, on the contrary, always run away the moment they begin to tease you."

"My pudicity, 'tis true, is soon alarmed; but I have never felt any ill consequences arising from it. But, Anastasie, the gate is opening—I tremble—we are about to see abominable faces, to hear the clankings of heavy chains, and the gnashing of many teeth!"

M. and Madame Pipelet, not having, as will be understood, heard the conversation of Doctor Herbin, were imbued with the popular prejudices which still exist, with regard to lunatic asylums—prejudices which, moreover, only forty years ago, were frightful realities.

The gate of the yard was open. This yard, forming a long parallelogram, was planted with trees, and furnished with many benches. On each side ran a gallery of elegant construction; well ventilated cells opened on to this gallery. About fifty men, all dressed in grey cloth, were either walking about, talking to each other, or were sitting, silent and contemplative, in the sunshine.

Nothing could differ more from the idea which is generally entertained of the eccentricities of costume and the peculiarities of countenance attributed to the insane, than the appearance of those who occupied this yard. A long habit of observation was even necessary to discover upon many of these faces, positive indications of madness.

On the arrival of Doctor Herbin, a number of them pressed round him, with joyful eagerness, holding out their hands to him, with a touching expression of confidence and gratitude; to which he replied, by cordially greeting them with "Good morning, my children!" Some of these unfortunate people, who were too far from the doctor to shake hands with him, came and held out their hands, with a sort of timid hesitation, to the persons who accompanied him.

"Good morning, my friends," said Germain to them, pressing their hands with a kindness which appeared to delight them.

"Pray, sir," said Madame Georges to the doctor, "are these mad people?"

"They are all the most dangerous ones in the house," replied the doctor, smiling. "We leave them together during the day; and during the night only, they are shut up in those cells, of which you see the doors open."

"How! these people are completely mad? but, when are they furiously so?"

"When their malady first attacks them, and they are brought here, and then, little by little, the system acts upon them; the sight of their companions has a calming effect upon them, and diverts their attention. Mild treatment appeases them; and their violent attacks, which, at first, often occur, become less frequent. Look, here comes one of the most violent among them."

This was a robust and well-made man, of about forty years of age, with long black hair, high forehead, bilious complexion, a penetrating look, and with a countenance full of intelligence. He approached the doctor, and said to him, with a tone of exquisite politeness, although evidently restraining the violence of his feelings: "Doctor, I ought, in my turn, to have the privilege of conversing with, and leading the blind man about. I shall have the honour of observing to you, that it would be a flagrant injustice, to deprive this man of my conversation, or to deliver him up"—and here the madman smiled with disdainful bitterness—"to the stupid wanderings of an idiot, who is altogether incapable—I do not think that I am venturing too far in saying this—who is altogether incapable of forming the slightest notions upon any science whatsoever—when my conversation would instruct and amuse the blind man. Thus," added he, with extreme volubility, "I should have given him my opinion upon isothermal and orthogonal superfices; making him observe, that equations, with partial differences, the geometrical interpretation of which is resumed in two orthogonal superfices, cannot be generally formed into an integral, on account of their complication. I would have proved to him that conjugated superfices are necessarily all isothermal, and we would have endeavoured to discover what superfices are capable of forming a system truly isothermal. If I do not delude myself, sir, compare this species of recreation to the stupidities with which the blind man is assailed," added the madman, pausing a little to take breath, "and then tell me, whether it is not worse than murder, to deprive him of my conversation?"

"Do not consider what he has just said, madame, for they are the lucubrations of a madman," said the doctor, whispering. "He, now and then, in this manner, discusses the most difficult questions in geometry and astronomy, and with a sagacity which would do honour to the most illustrious professors in those sciences. His knowledge is immense. He speaks every living language; but he is, alas! a martyr to his vanity, and to his thirst for learning: he imagines, that he has absorbed in his own mind, all human knowledge; and that, by keeping him here, humanity is again plunged into an abyss of the most profound ignorance."

The doctor then replied aloud to the madman, who appeared to be awaiting his answer with respectful anxiety: "My dear M. Charles, your application appears to me founded in justice; and this poor blind man, who, I believe, is also dumb, but happily is not deaf, will find infinite charms in the conversation of a man so erudite as you are. I will take care that justice shall be done you."

"Besides this, you still insist on keeping me here, and on depriving the universe of all human knowledge, which I have concentrated in myself," said the madman, becoming more and more animated, and beginning to gesticulate in an agitated manner.

"Come, come, be calm, my good M. Charles; fortunately the universe has not yet perceived the great loss it has suffered; as soon as it shall claim you, we will hasten to comply with its demand. In every state of things, a man of your capacity, of your knowledge, can always do great good."

"But I am with regard to science, what the ark of Noah was to physical nature!" exclaimed he, grinding his teeth, and looking wildly.

"I know that, my dear friend."

"You wish to hide the light under the bushel," cried he, clenching his fists; "but then I would shiver you like glass!" added he, with a menacing gesture, his face purple with passion, and his veins swelled almost to bursting.

"Ah! M. Charles," replied the doctor, fixing upon him a look, at once calm and penetrating, and giving to his voice a flattering and affectionate tone, "I thought you the greatest philosopher of modern times ——"

"And of the past, too!" cried the madman, forgetting, all at once, his anger for his vanity.

"You will not let me finish what I was about to say—that you are the greatest philosopher of times past, times present ——"

"And times to come!" added the madman, proudly.

"Oh! the terrible chatterer! who will persist in interrupting me," said the doctor, smiling, and patting him in a friendly manner, on the shoulder; "would not one suppose, that I am ignorant of the admiration you inspire, and which you fully merit? Come, then, let us go to the blind man; conduct me to him."

"You are an excellent man, doctor. Come, then, and you shall hear the fooleries they make him listen to, when I could say such magnificent things to him, rejoined the madman, now perfectly tranquillised, and walking before the doctor, with a satisfied air.

"I must acknowledge to you, sir," said Germain, who had gone close to his wife, on perceiving that she became alarmed, when the madman was speaking and gesticulating so violently, "at one moment, I was fearful that a crisis was approaching."

"Bless you, sir, in former times, at the first show of excitement, the first menacing gesture, of this unfortunate man, the keepers would have thrown themselves upon him; would have bound his arms, would have beaten him, would have let water fall upon him from a great height —one of the most atrocious tortures human ingenuity can devise. Judge of the effects of such treatment upon such an energetic and irritable organization, whose expansive power becomes the greater, the more it is compressed. After that, he would have fallen into one of those frightful fits of fury, which defy the most powerful restraint, exasperate themselves by their frequency, and become, at length, almost incurable; whereas, as you have seen, by not at once confining this momentary effervescence, or by diverting it, with the assistance of that excessive mobility of mind, which is remarked in almost all insane persons, these ephemeral ebullitions are cooled down as quickly as they rise."

"And who is this blind man that he has mentioned? is that a delusion arising from his madness?" asked Madame Georges.

"No, madame; it is a very singular history," replied the doctor. "This blind man was found, in a low haunt, in the Champs Elysées, where a band of robbers and assassins were arrested. This man was found chained, in the centre of a subterraneous cavern; at his side was the corpse of a woman, so dreadfully mutilated, that she could not be recognised."

"How dreadful!" said Madame Georges, shuddering.*

"This man is frightfully ugly; all his face has been burnt by vitriol. Since his arrival here, he has not pronounced a single word. I do not know whether he is really dumb, or only affects to be so. By a singular chance, the only furious attacks he has had, have occurred during my absence, and always at night. Unfortunately, we can obtain no reply to any question that we put to him, and we cannot, therefore, elicit any information as to his state of mind. His attacks are occasioned by some cause, which is to us altogether impenetrable. The other patients pay him much attention; they direct his steps, and they take pleasure in talking to him, alas! according to the degree of intelligence they possess. See! here he is."

All the persons who accompanied the doctor, drew back with horror at the appearance of the Schoolmaster—for it was he!

He was not mad; but he feigned to be both dumb and insane. He had massacred Chouette, not in a fit of madness, but in a delirium brought on by fever, similar to that he had already suffered during his dreadful vision at the farm of Bouqueval. After his arrest at the tavern in the Champs Elysées, having recovered from his temporary delirium, he found himself shut up in one of the cells of the Conciergerie, in which they provisionally confined insane persons. Hearing it said around him: "He is a madman, a furious madman," he determined upon continuing to act the part of one; and decided on appearing altogether dumb, that he might not betray himself by answering any questions that might be put to him, in the event of his pretended madness being doubted. This stratagem succeeded. Being conducted to Bicetre, he pretended from time to time to have violent fits of madness, always taking care to choose the nighttime for these exhibitions, in order to escape the penetrating observation of the chief physician. The surgeon in waiting, being awoke and called up in haste, hardly ever arrived before the fit was over. The few accomplices of the Schoolmaster, who knew his real name, and his escape from the galleys of Rochefort, were ignorant what had become of him; and besides which, they had no interest in giving information against him. His identity could not, therefore, be proved. By continuing to play the dumb madman, he hoped to be able to remain perpetually at Bicetre—yes, to the end of his life: this was the only wish, the sole desire of this man, thanks to the impossibility of doing harm, which paralysed his guilty inclinations. Thanks to the profound solitude in which he had lived in Bras-Rouge's cavern, remorse had, as has been shown, worn into his iron soul. By being compelled to concentrate his mind in incessant meditation,

* Rodolph had always kept Madame Georges ignorant of the fate of her husband, the Schoolmaster, after the latter had escaped from the galleys of Rochefort.

[The Schoolmaster at Bicêtre.]

he recollection of his past crimes constantly re-verted to him. Cut off from all communication with the outer world, his ideas at last assumed ome shape—the fitful fancies of his brain, as he ad said to Chouette. Then the features of his ictims would appear to him. But it was not adness; it was the power of recollection arried to its greatest height. Thus this man, et in the prime of life, with an athletic consti-ution—this man, who had, doubtless, still many ears to live—this man, who still enjoyed the ull possession of his reason, was to pass his ingering years among madmen, and without ittering a word. If not—if he should be dis-overed—he would be dragged to the scaffold, here to expiate the new murders he had com-itted, or he would be condemned to perpetual eclusion among wretches, for whom he felt a orror which augmented in proportion to his epentance.

The Schoolmaster was sitting on a bench—a forest of grey hair covered his hideous and enormous head; one elbow was placed upon his knee, and his chin rested upon one hand. Although this frightful mask was deprived of eyesight, his nose burnt off by vitriol, and his mouth deformed, an overpowering and invincible despair was visible in this monstrous face.

One of the madmen, a youth, with a melancholy but benevolent countenance, was on his knees before the Schoolmaster, holding one of his powerful hands between his own, and looking at him with kindness—and with a soft voice, kept incessantly repeating these words: "Some strawberries!—some strawberries!—some strawberries!"

"That is the only conversation!" exclaimed the learned madman, "that this idiot can address to the blind man. His bodily eyes may be closed for ever, but those of his mind are doubtless

open; and he will feel thankful if I should place myself in communication with him!"

"I do not doubt," said the doctor, while the poor melancholy-looking lad contemplated the hideous face of the Schoolmaster with compassion, and repeated in his sweet voice: "Some strawberries—some strawberries—some strawberries!"

"Since his entrance here, that poor idiot has never pronounced any words but those," said the doctor to Madame Georges, who was looking at the Schoolmaster with horror. "I cannot discover what mysterious event is connected with these words."

"Heavens! my dear mother!" said Germain to Madame Georges, "how overwhelmed you appear at the sight of that poor blind man!"

"It is true, my son," replied Madame Georges, "my heart is woefully oppressed; the sight of him quite pains me. How distressing it is to see humanity under so mournful an aspect!"

Madame Georges had hardly pronounced these words, when the Schoolmaster shuddered—his rugged face became pale, even under his scars. He raised and turned his head so quickly towards the place where Germain's mother stood, that the latter could not help screaming, although she did not know who the miserable object was. The Schoolmaster had recognised the voice of his wife; and her words informed him that she was speaking to his son.

"What is the matter with you, mother?" cried Germain.

"Nothing, my child, but the movement that man made—the expression of his face—all this alarmed me. Pray, sir, forgive my weakness," added she, addressing the doctor; "I almost regret having yielded to my curiosity in accompanying my son here."

"It is only for once, my mother; there is nothing to be sorry for."

"It is very certain that our good mother will never return here; nor we either, my dear Germain, shall we? it is so melancholy," said Rigolette; "it tears one's heart."

"Come! come! you are a little coward—is she not, doctor? is not my wife a coward?" said Germain, smiling.

"I acknowledge," said the doctor, "that the sight of this unhappy blind and dumb man, has affected me—even me, who have seen misery in so many forms."

"What a horrid looking creature, eh, old dear?" said Anastasie, whispering. "Well, in comparison with you, all men appear as hideous to me as that frightful figure; and not one of them can boast I ever gave them any encouragement!"

"Oh! Anastasie! I shall dream of that horrible face, that's certain—it will give me the nightmare."

"My friend," said the doctor to the Schoolmaster, "how is your health?"

The Schoolmaster remained mute.

"Do you not hear me, then?" rejoined the doctor, touching him gently on the shoulder.

The Schoolmaster did not answer; he bowed down his head. After some seconds, from his sightless eyes there fell a tear.

"He weeps!" said the doctor.

"Poor man!" added Germain, with compassion.

The Schoolmaster shuddered—he had again heard the voice of his son—his son had felt compassionately towards him!

"What is the matter with you? what grief is there that afflicts you?" said the doctor.

The Schoolmaster, without uttering a word, hid his face within his hands.

"We shall not learn anything from him," said the doctor.

"Leave him to me, and I will console him," said the learned madman, with an air of much gravity and pretension. "I will demonstrate to him, that all the different kinds of orthagonal superfices in which the three systems are isothermal, are, first, those of superfices of the secondary order—second, those of ellipsoidical revolution around the smaller axis or the greater axis—third, those—but, no, no," added the madman, changing his mind, after reflecting a little, "I will converse with him upon the planetary system;" and then addressing himself to the young idiot, who was still kneeling before the Schoolmaster: "You, with your strawberries, begone from this."

"My good lad," said the doctor to the young idiot, "every one of you must, in his turn, lead the blind man, and talk to him: let your companion take your place."

The young idiot instantly obeyed, rose up, looked timidly at the doctor, with his large, blue eyes, showed his respect to him by a bow, gave a sign of leave-taking to the Schoolmaster, and withdrew, repeating: "Some strawberries! some strawberries!"

The doctor, perceiving the painful impression which this scene had left upon the mind of Madame Georges, said to her: "Happily, madame, we are now going to Morel; and, should my hopes be realised, your heart will rejoice at seeing this excellent man restored to the tenderness of his worthy wife and daughter." And then the doctor went on, followed by the whole party.

The Schoolmaster remained alone with the learned madman, who began to explain to him—and very learnedly, very eloquently—the wonderful courses of the stars, which silently describe their immense circles in the skies; but the Schoolmaster was not listening to him.

He was reflecting with profound despair, that he should never again hear the voice of his son, or of his wife. Aware of the just horror he had inspired in them—of the misery, the disgrace, the alarm, he would have plunged them into, had he revealed his name—he would rather have endured a thousand deaths, than to have discovered himself to them. One last consolation remained to him. For one moment, he had inspired his son with pity towards himself; and, in spite of himself, he called to mind those words which Rodolph had addressed to him before inflicting his terrible chastisement: "Each word which is now a blasphemy, will then be a prayer. In your power, you are hard-hearted and merciless; in your weakness, you will be gentle and kind. Your heart, now steeled against remorse, will one day bleed for your victims. You have degraded the reason with which God has endowed you; you have reduced it to a mere beastly instinct for prey and for blood: but one day your reason will be revivified by your expiation—will be exalted by the consciousness of pardon. Thus far, you have not spared what the ferocious monarch of the woods respects—the female and her offspring; but the remainder of your life will be devoted to atoning for your crimes, and your last prayer will crave from God the boon of dying in the arms of your wife and child."

"We are about to pass before the idiots' yard, and we shall then arrive at the house in which Morel is waiting," said the doctor, as he went out of the yard in which he left the Schoolmaster.

Notwithstanding the mournful feelings which the sight of these poor madmen had inspired in her mind, Madame Georges could not avoid stopping for a moment, while passing before a railed yard, in which were inclosed the incurable idiots. Poor miserable beings, who often have not even the instinct of animals, and whose origin even, is almost always unknown — unknown to all, and even to themselves — they thus pass through life, absolute strangers to feeling and to thought, experiencing only the most limited animal wants.

If madness does not at once reveal itself to the superficial observer, by the mere inspection of a madman's countenance, it is, on the contrary, but too easy to recognise the physical characteristics of idiotcy.

It was not necessary for Doctor Herbin to point out to Madame Georges, the expression of savage brutality, of stupid insensibility, or of gaping vacancy, which imprinted on the features of these miserable creatures, an expression hideous and painful to behold. They were, almost all of them, dressed in long and mean loose frocks, in tatters; for, notwithstanding every possible attention on the part of the keepers, these wretched beings, absolutely deprived of instinct and of reason, could not be prevented from tearing and soiling their clothing, by dragging themselves along, or rolling like animals in the mud and dirt of the yards, where they remain during the day.

Some of them, huddled together in the dark corners of a shed, which protects from the sun or rain, rolled up, or crouching like animals in their holes, and continually making a mournful, humming sort of noise. Others, standing upright, their backs against a wall, mute, immoveable, and looking steadfastly at the sun.

An old man, of enormous obesity, was sitting upon a wooden chair, devouring his pittance with animal voraciousness, and turning from one side to the other with oblique and angry looks.

Some were walking hurriedly round a small circle, to which they had limited themselves. This singular exercise continued, uninterruptedly, for hours.

Others, sitting on the ground, were balancing themselves, by throwing their bodies backwards and forwards, alternately, and only interrupted this monotony by whirling movements, by shouts of laughter—that shrieking, guttural laughter, so common among idiots.

There were others, finally, who, in a state of complete annihilation, only opened their eyes at meal times, and remained inert, inanimate, deaf, dumb, and blind, without uttering a sound or a cry; without even making a gesture, to give evidence of their vitality.

The complete absence of all verbal or intelligible communication, is one of the most mournful characteristics of an assemblage of idiots. Madmen, notwithstanding the incoherency of their words and of their thoughts, speak to each other, know and seek each other out; but between idiots there reigns a stupid indifference, a savage isolation. They are never heard to utter an articulate word; from time to time they break out in savage laughter, or utter moans and cries having no human sound; but few among them even know their keepers. And yet—let us here report it with admiration—out of respect to the *creature*, these miserable beings, who appear no longer appertaining to our species, and not even to the animal species, from the complete annihilation of their intellectual faculties; these beings, although known to be utterly incurable, and who appear to have more affinity to the moluscan order than to animated beings, but who still drag through all the phases of a prolonged existence, are surrounded by the most tender cares, and by comforts of the existence of which they are not sensible.

There can be no doubt, that it is good thus to respect the principle of human dignity, even in the miserable beings who possess nothing in common with mankind, except the exterior form; but let us again repeat, we ought also to value the dignity of those who, endowed with all their intellects, and full of zeal and activity, form the living power of the nation; to instil into them the consciousness of this moral dignity, by encouraging it, by rewarding it where it manifests itself by love of industry, by labour, by honesty; and not to say to it, with a semi-orthodox egotism: "Let us punish here below—God will reward above."

"Poor people!" said Madame Georges, following the doctor, after having thrown a last look into the idiots' yard; "how mournful it is, to think there is no remedy for these evils!"

"None, alas! madame," replied the doctor; "and above all, when they have arrived at this age; for now, thanks to the progress of science, idiot children receive a sort of education, which at least develops the atom of incomplete intelligence with which they are sometimes endowed. We have a school here,* conducted with infinite perseverance and enlightened patience, which has already produced the most satisfactory results. By very ingenious methods, and which are exclusively adapted to their positions, we exercise at once the moral and the physical powers of these poor children; and many of them at last get so far as to know letters, figures, and to distinguish colours. We have even succeeded in teaching them to sing in chorus; and I assure you, madame, there is a peculiar charm, at once sorrowful and touching, in hearing their strange, plaintive, sometimes even pain-exciting voices, raised to heaven in a hymn, the words of which, although French, are unintelligible to them. But we have now arrived at the building in which we shall find Morel. I recommended that he should be left completely alone this morning, in order that the effect which I hope to produce upon him may have the greater scope."

"What is the nature of his madness, sir?" whispered Madame Georges to the doctor, that Louise might not overhear her.

"He imagines, that if he cannot earn thirteen hundred francs by his day's work, to pay a debt he has contracted with a notary named Ferrand, Louise must die upon the scaffold, being convicted of infanticide."

"Ah! sir, this notary was a monster!" exclaimed Madame Georges, who was aware of the hatred of this man against Germain. "Louise Morel and her father, are not his only victims; he persecuted my son, with a most pitiless animosity."

* This school is another institution of the most curious nd interesting nature.

"Louise Morel has told me all," replied the doctor. "Thanks to heaven! that miserable wretch has ceased to exist. But have the goodness to wait for me here, a minute, with these good people; I will go and see how Morel is;" and then, addressing the daughter of the lapidary: "I beg, Louise, that you will be attentively upon the watch, and at the moment you shall hear me cry out: 'Come,' immediately rush in, but alone; when I say: 'Come,' a second time, the rest of the party will come in."

"Ah! sir, my heart fails me," said Louise, wiping away her tears; "my poor father! Should this trial prove ineffectual?"

"I hope that it will save him. For a long time past I have been preparing it. Come, be comforted; and remember the instructions I have given you." And the doctor, leaving the persons who had accompanied him, went into a room, the grated windows of which opened upon a garden.

Thanks to repose, a healthy diet, and the attention which had been shown him, the face of Morel was no longer pale, ghastly, and worn down with illness; his cheeks were well filled out, and, slightly tinged, gave evidence of the return of health; but a melancholy smile, a fixed look, which still gave a rigidity to his countenance, proved that his reason was not completely reestablished.

When the doctor went into the room, Morel was sitting near, and leaning upon a table, pretending to work at his trade of a lapidary, muttering: "Thirteen hundred francs — thirteen hundred francs; or, if not, Louise upon the scaffold. Thirteen hundred francs — I must work—I must work—I must work."

This aberration, of which the recurrence had become less and less frequent, had always been the primary symptom of his madness. The doctor was at first much annoyed, to find that Morel should then be under the influence of this monomania; but, on reflection, hoped to make this circumstance aid his plans. He took from his pocket a purse, containing seventy-five louis, which he had expressly provided himself with; he poured this gold into his hand, and abruptly said to Morel, who, being deeply absorbed in his pretended work, had not perceived the entrance of the doctor: "My good Morel, you have worked enough; you have, at least, earned the thirteen hundred francs you require to save Louise—there they are:" and the doctor threw the gold upon the table.

"Louise is saved!" exclaimed the lapidary, eagerly gathering up the money; "I will run to the notary's:" and, rising hurriedly, he ran towards the door.

"Come!" cried the doctor, with the most lively anxiety; for the instantaneous cure of the lapidary, might mainly depend upon this first impression.

He had hardly uttered the word, "Come," when Louise appeared at the door, at the very moment that her father reached it. Morel, astounded, drew back two paces, letting the gold fall. During some minutes, he gazed upon Louise with profound amazement, but did not yet recognise her; he appeared, however, to be endeavouring to recall his recollection; and then, gently approaching her, by degrees, he looked at her with timid and anxious curiosity. Louise, trembling with her emotions, with difficulty restrained her tears; while the doctor, who, by a sign, advised her to remain quiet, was attentively and silently watching the slightest movement of the lapidary's features. The latter, still leaning towards his daughter, began to turn pale; he passed both hands over his forehead, which was inundated with perspiration; and then, making another step towards her, he was about to speak to her. His voice died on his lips; his paleness increased, and he looked around him in surprise, as if he were, little by little, awaking from a dream.

"Well! very well!" said the doctor, whispering to Louise; "this is a good sign. When I say 'Come,' throw yourself into his arms, and call him father."

The lapidary placed his hands upon his chest, and looked at himself, if we may so express it, from head to foot, as if to assure himself of his own identity. His features expressed a painful uncertainty; instead of fixing his eyes upon his daughter, he appeared to wish to escape her sight. Then, saying to himself, in a low tone, and broken accents: "No — no — a dream — where am I? It is impossible — a dream — it is not she ——" and then, seeing the pieces of gold scattered about the floor: "And this gold?—I cannot remember. I am waking, then? My head turns round. I do not dare to look—I am ashamed—it is not Louise."

"Come!" said the doctor, in a loud voice.

"My father! look at me, then, my own dear father! I am Louise, your daughter!" cried she, bursting into tears, and throwing herself into the lapidary's arms, at the same moment that his wife, Rigolette, Madame Georges, Germain, and the Pipelets, came into the room.

"Oh! gracious God!" exclaimed Morel, whom Louise was overwhelming with caresses; "where am I? what is it that they want? what can have happened? I cannot believe ——" and then, after a few moments' silence, he hurriedly caught Louise's head between his hands, looked at her with fixed attention, and, his emotions increasing every instant, he exclaimed: "Louise!"

"He is saved!" said the doctor.

"My husband! my poor Morel!" cried the wife of the lapidary, hurrying towards him.

"My wife!" rejoined Morel; "my wife and my daughter!"

"And I, too, M. Morel!" said Rigolette; "all your friends had appointed to meet here."

"All your friends, you see, M. Morel!" added Germain.

"Mademoiselle Rigolette! M. Germain!" said the lapidary, recognising every person, with increased astonishment.

"And your old friends from the lodge!" said Anastasie, approaching him, in her turn, with Alfred. "Here are the Pipelets, the old Pipelets; friends for life, be assured, Father Morel. What a happy day this is!"

"M. Pipelet and his wife! so many friends around me! It appears to me that it is a long time since — but, it is you, Louise — is it not, Louise?" exclaimed he, transportedly, and pressing his daughter in his arms; "is it you, Louise?—quite sure?"

"Yes, my poor father! yes, it is I! Here's my mother! Here are all your friends. You will not leave us any more—your troubles are all over. We shall be happy now—all of us."

"All happy!—but—wait a little, till I recollect myself — all happy! But I appear to remember that they came to take you to prison, Louise!"

"Yes, father; but I have got out again—acquitted—you see that here I am, with you."

"Stay! stay! my memory is returning to me!" and then the lapidary rejoined with terror: "And the notary?"

"He is dead."

"Dead! he dead! Then I believe you. We may still be happy. But where am I? how did I come here? how long since? and for what? I cannot at all remember ——"

"You have been so ill, sir," said the doctor, "that you have been brought here, into the country. You have had a fever—a very violent fever, attended with delirium."

"Yes, yes! I recollect—the last thing that I remember—before my illness, was, that I was talking with my daughter, and who—who was it? Ah! yes—a very generous man—M. Rodolph—yes. He had prevented my being arrested—after that, I really remember nothing."

"Your illness was complicated by a loss of memory," said the doctor. "The sight of your daughter—of your wife—and of your friends—has restored it to you."

"And in whose house am I, then?"

"In the house of a friend—of M. Rodolph," Germain hastened to say. "It was thought that change of air would be serviceable to you."

"Very well said," observed the doctor, quietly; and addressing one of the keepers, he said: "Send the coach to the end of the garden-alley, so that it may not have to cross the yards, and to go out at the great gate."

As is frequently the case in madness, Morel had no sort of recollection, or consciousness, of the alienation of mind with which he had been attacked. Some minutes afterwards, leaning on the arms of his wife and daughter, and accompanied by an assistant-surgeon, whom, from prudent motives, the doctor had sent in charge of him as far as Paris, Morel got into the hackney-coach, and left Bicetre, without at all suspecting that he had ever been confined there as a madman.

* * *

"You believe that poor man completely cured?" said Madame Georges to the doctor, who was accompanying her as far as the principal entrance to Bicetre.

"I believe so, madame; and I wished expressly to leave him under the happy influence of the reunion with his family. I should have feared to have separated him from them. Besides which, one of my pupils will remain with him, and will point out the regimen that is to be observed; and I will myself visit him every day, until his recovery is completely confirmed—for, not only does he interest me much, but he was also most particularly recommended to my care, on his entrance here, by the *chargé d'affaires* of the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

Germain and his mother exchanged significant glances.

"I am greatly obliged to you, sir," said Madame Georges, "for the kindness with which you have permitted me to visit this fine establishment; and I congratulate myself on having been present at this touching scene, which your knowledge had so skilfully combined and prognosticated."

"And I doubly congratulate myself, madame, on this success which restores so excellent a man to the affection of his family."

Some moments afterwards, Madame Georges, Rigolette, and Germain, had left Bicetre, together with M. and Madame Pipelet.

* * *

At the instant of Doctor Herbin's returning into the yard, he met one of the superior officers of the establishment, who said to him: "Ah! my dear M. Herbin, you will never imagine the scene which I have just witnessed. For an observer like yourself, it would have been an inexhaustible source."

"How is this? what scene?"

"You know that we have here two women, condemned to death, a mother and daughter, and who are to be executed to-morrow."

"I am aware of that."

"Well, in my life, I have never witnessed such audacity and self-possession, as that of the mother; she is, really, an infernal woman."

"You mean the widow Martial, who evinced such shamelessness during her trial?"

"The same!"

"And what has she been doing now?"

"She had requested to be confined in the same cell with her daughter, until the moment of her execution. Her request had been complied with. Her daughter, who is much less hardened than herself, appeared to soften as the fatal moment drew near; whereas, the diabolical boldness of the widow continued to increase, if it be possible. Just now, the venerable almoner of the prison entered their dungeon, to offer them the consolations of religion. The daughter was preparing herself to accept them, when her mother, without for one instant losing her icy calmness, overwhelmed both her and the almoner with such frightful sarcasms, that this venerable priest was compelled to leave the dungeon, after having in vain endeavoured to make this indomitable woman listen to some holy words."

"On the eve of mounting the scaffold, such hardness of heart is really demoniacal," said the doctor.

"Besides, one would call them a family pursued by the Destinies, mentioned in ancient history. The father died upon the scaffold; one of their sons is at the galleys; another, also condemned to death, has lately escaped. The elder son, and two young children, are the only ones who have escaped this frightful contagion. And yet, this woman had sent to ask this eldest son—the only honest man of all this miserable race—to come to-morrow morning, to hear her last wishes."

"What an interview!"

"Do you not feel some curiosity to be present at it?"

"Frankly, I say, I would not. You know my principles with regard to punishment by death. I have no occasion to witness so dreadful a scene, to fortify me in my opinions. If this horrible woman carries her indomitable audacity with her to the scaffold, what a deplorable example will it offer to the people! There is something, also, in this twofold execution, which appears singular to me—it is the day they have chosen for it to take place upon."

"What do you mean?"

"It is to-day Mid-Lent."

"Well?"

"The execution is to take place to-morrow, at seven o'clock. Thus, bands of people in masks, who will have passed this night in the faubourg balls, will necessarily meet, on re-entering Paris, the melancholy procession."

It should also be taken into consideration,

that from the place of execution, Barrière Saint-Jacques, the noise of music from the neighbouring dancing gardens can be heard; and that, in order to celebrate the last day of the Carnival, the people dance in those places even until ten and eleven o'clock in the morning.

* * *

The sun rose the next morning, with more than usual splendour. At four o'clock, several picquets of infantry and cavalry surrounded and guarded the different avenues leading to Bicetre.

We will now conduct our reader into the dungeon where the widow of the executed felon and his daughter Calebasse, were confined together.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TOILET.

In Bicetre, there is a gloomy corridor, having a few grated windows, being so many loop-holes situated a little above the level of a court-yard, which leads to the dungeon for criminals condemned to death.

The only light which this dungeon received, was through a large wicket, made in the upper part of the door, which opened into the gloomy passage already mentioned.

In this dungeon, with its low ceiling, its damp and mouldy walls, and its floor paved with stones as cold as the pavement of a sepulchre, were the widow Martial and her daughter confined.

The harsh features of the widow of the executed felon—as hard, insensible, and wan, as a marble mask, stood out in strong relief, amid the obscurity which pervaded the dungeon.

Deprived of the use of her hands—for under her black dress she wore a strait-jacket—a sort of long spencer, of coarse, grey linen, is laced behind her back, the arms of which are closed at the end in form of a bag. She requested that her cap might be taken off, complaining of great heat in her head. Her grey hair fell spreading around her shoulders. Seated on the side of her bed, her feet resting upon the stones, she was gazing fixedly at her daughter Calebasse, who was on the opposite side of the dungeon.

The latter was reclining against the wall, half-lying on her bed. She also had on a strait-jacket. Her head was bent upon her chest; her eyes fixed; her breathing much oppressed. With the exception of a slightly convulsive trembling, which, from time to time, agitated her lower lip, her features appeared tolerably calm, notwithstanding their livid pallor.

Within the dungeon, but at the end, near the door, and under the open wicket, a veteran soldier, decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honour, with a rough and weather-beaten face, bald head, and long, grey moustaches, was seated upon a chair. He was placed there to guard the prisoners, and keep them always in his sight.

"There is an icy coldness here, and yet my eyes are burning; and then, I am thirsty—always thirsty," said Calebasse, after some minutes' silence. Then addressing the veteran, she added: "Some water, if you please, sir."

The old soldier rose, took from a basket a pewter pitcher full of water, filled a glass with it, went over to Calebasse, and putting the glass to her mouth, let her drink it slowly, the strait-jacket preventing the convict from using her own hands. After having eagerly drank it, she said: "I am obliged to you, sir."

"Do you wish to drink?" said the soldier to the widow. The latter replied by giving a negative motion of her head.

The veteran sat down again. A silence of some duration then ensued. "What o'clock is it, sir?" asked Calebasse.

"It will soon be half-past four," said the soldier.

"In three hours," rejoined Calebasse, with a sardonic and bitter smile, alluding to the time fixed for her execution—"in three hours——" She did not dare to conclude the sentence.

The widow shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. Her daughter comprehended what was passing in her mind, and she continued: "You have more courage than I have, mother. You have never known what it is to fear—you——"

"Never!"

"I know it well. I see it well. Your features are as calm as if you were now sitting in our chimney corner. Ah! those good times are far distant—far distant!"

"You incessant talker!"

"It is true, instead of remaining there thinking, without saying anything, I like better to talk; I like better——"

"To drown your thoughts, coward!"

"Even if it were so, you cannot expect every one to have your courage. I have done all I can to imitate you; I would not listen to the priest, because you would not; but I was, perhaps, wrong, after all; for, in short," added the sentenced girl, shuddering, "after all, who knows? hereafter is very soon—it is within——"

"Within three hours."

"How coolly you say that, my mother! but, good God! it is true! To think, that now we are both here—that we are not sick—that we do not wish to die—and yet, within three hours——"

"In three hours you will have terminated your life like a true Martial! you will be in the dark: that is all!"

"It is not right to speak thus to your daughter," said the old soldier, in a deliberate and grave voice; "it would have been better to have allowed her to listen to the priest."

The widow shrugged her shoulders again, with ferocious contempt, and continued to address Calebasse, without turning her head towards the veteran: "Courage! my daughter: we will show them that women have more heart than men, with their priests and sacraments—the cowards!"

"Commandant Le Blond was the bravest officer of the third regiment of Chasseurs; and I saw him, cut up with wounds, in the breach of Saragossa, die, while he signed himself with the cross."

"You were his sacristan, then," said the widow, bursting into a wild laugh.

"I was his soldier," replied the veteran, mildly; "it was to show you that one who is no coward, can pray when dying."

Calebasse looked attentively at the sun-burnt visage of the man—a perfect type of the soldier of the Empire—a deep scar seamed his left cheek, and was lost beneath his heavy, grey moustache. The simple words of the veteran, whose features, scars, stripes, and red ribbon,

announced that his courage had been tried in battles, made a deep impression upon the daughter of the widow; she had rejected the consolations of the priest, more through fear of the sarcasms of her mother, than through insensibility; and in her last thoughts, she opposed the convictions of the soldier to the sacrilegious railleries of the widow. She was convinced, by his testimony, that she could listen, without having her courage impeached, to that religious instinct to which intrepid men had yielded.

She continued, with anguish: "Why did I not listen to the priest? there is no weakness in that; besides, it would have stunned my senses —and then again, who knows what will happen hereafter?"

"Again," said the widow, with a look of overpowering contempt, "it is a pity that we have no more time—you might be made a nun: the arrival of your brother Martial would complete your conversion; but the good son, the honest man will not come."

At the moment the widow spoke these words, the huge key of the door turned in the lock, and the door was opened.

"Already!" exclaimed Calebasse, with a convulsive start—"they have anticipated the hour! they have deceived!" and her face assumed a ghastly expression.

"So much the better; if the watch of the hangman is too fast, you will have less time to disgrace me."

"Madame," said one of the satellites of the prison, to the condemned woman, with that sort of commiseration which death inspires, "your son has arrived; do you wish to see him?"

"Yes," replied the widow, without turning her head.

"Come in, sir," said the attendant.

Martial entered. The veteran remained in the dungeon, the door of which was left open, by way of precaution. Through the shadow of the hall, lighted by a lamp and the dawn of day, several soldiers were seen; some seated upon a bench, and others standing.

Martial was as pale as his mother; his features expressed horror and anguish; his knees trembled under him. In spite of the crimes of that woman, in spite of the aversion she had always shown him, he thought it was his duty to obey her last wishes. As soon as he entered the dungeon, the widow cast upon him a piercing look, and said to him, in an angry voice, as if to arouse bitter hatred in the soul of her son: "You see what they are about to do to your mother and sister."

"It is frightful, mother! but, alas! I forewarned you of it."

The widow compressed her lips in anger. Her son did not understand her. She continued: "They are going to kill us, as they did your father."

"Good God! and I can do nothing to aid you! Why did not you and my sister listen to me? you would not have been here now!"

"Ah! I see how it is," said the widow, with her habitual sneer; "you regard our punishment as just."

"My mother!"

"You are happy now; for you will be able to say, without lying, that your mother is dead, and you will not blush for her."

"If I were a bad son," said Martial, shocked at the cruelty of his mother, "I should not be here."

"You come through curiosity."

"I come in obedience to your request."

"If I had listened to you, Martial, instead of listening to mother, I should not have been here!" exclaimed Calebasse, with a distressing voice, and yielding to the anguish and terror which the influence of the widow had thus far restrained; "it is your fault, mother—may you be cursed!"

"She repents, she accuses me; you must enjoy it," said the widow to her son, with a peal of diabolical laughter.

"Without answering his mother, Martial approached Calebasse, whose agony had commenced, and said to her, with compassion: "It is now too late, my poor sister."

"Never too late to be a coward," said the mother; "what a race! what a race! Fortunately, Nicholas has escaped; happily, François will escape from you also; they are already vicious, and misery will do the rest."

"Ah! Martial, watch them closely, or they will die like their mother and sister," said Calebasse; "they will be beheaded also!"

"It will be in vain for him to watch!" exclaimed the widow, with ferocious exultation; "vice and misery are stronger than he, and some day they will avenge father, mother, and sister."

"Your horrible expectation will be disappointed, my mother," replied Martial, indignantly; "neither they nor I will ever dread misery. Louve saved the life of the young girl whom Nicholas attempted to drown; the relations have offered a large sum of money, or a smaller sum, with land in Algeria, by the side of a farm which they have already given to a man who has rendered them great service. We have preferred the land; it is attended with danger, but that suits Louve and myself. We start to-morrow, with the children, and never expect to return to Europe."

"Do you speak the truth?" said the widow to Martial, in a tone of irritated surprise.

"I never lie!"

"You lie to-day, to excite my anger!"

"You are angry because the prosperity of your children is secure!"

"Yes! they will make lambs out of young wolves—the blood of your father, your sister, and my own, will not be avenged!"

"Do not speak thus, in this awful moment!"

"I have killed! I am to be killed! we are quits!"

"I beseech you, mother, repent!"

The widow burst into a new peal of laughter.

"I have lived for thirty years in crime, and they have given me three days, with death at the end of them, to repent for thirty years; is that time enough? No! when my head falls, it will grin with rage and hatred!"

"Help! help, brother! take me from this place, they are coming!" muttered Calebasse, in a fainting voice; for the wretched woman began to rave.

"Will you be silent!" said the widow, exasperated by the wretchedness of Calebasse; "will you be silent, the infamous one! And she is my daughter!"

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed Martial, overpowered by this horrible scene, "why did you send for me?"

"Because I thought I could inspire you with some courage and hatred; but he who is without the one, cannot have the other, coward!"

"Mother!"

"Coward! coward!"

At this moment, the sound of steps was heard in the corridor; the veteran pulled out his watch, looked at the hour, and arose. The sun, which was just rising, dazzling and glorious, threw into the corridor its brilliant rays, through the open door.

The entrance to the dungeon was thus radiant with sunbeams. In the midst of the luminous zone, which was traced upon the floor, two guards placed two chairs, and the jailor informed the widow, in a moved voice: "Madame, it is time!"

The sentenced woman stood upright, perfectly calm; but Calebasse uttered distressing cries. Four men entered the dungeon; three of them, meanly dressed, held in their hands bundles of small, but strong cord. The latter of the four, dressed in black, wearing a round hat and a white cravat, gave to the jailor a paper—that man was the executioner! The paper which he gave, was a receipt for the two convicts who were to be guillotined. The executioner was now to take possession of these two creatures of God, and be henceforth solely responsible for them.

To the desperate fright of Calebasse, a torpor had succeeded. Two of the executioner's aids were obliged to seat her upon the bed, and support her in that position; her jaws were forced together by convulsions, and a few disconnected words only could escape; she rolled around her eyes, which had lost all expression; her chin dropped upon her breast, and without the support of the two aids, her body would have fallen an inanimate mass. Martial having embraced, for the last time, the unfortunate wretch, remained immoveable and terrified, unable to advance a step, paralysed by this terrible scene. The cold audacity of the widow sustained her to the last; bearing her head upright, she released herself from the strait-jacket which restrained her movements, and appeared in a black woollen dress.

"Where shall I go?" she asked, in a firm tone.

"Have the kindness to be seated in one of these chairs," said the executioner to her, pointing to one of the two chairs placed at the entrance of the dungeon.

The door having been left open, they saw in the corridor, the director of the prison, some guards, and a few men, whom privilege entitled to satisfy their curiosity. The widow walked with a bold step to the place assigned her, and when she passed before her daughter, she stopped, and said to her, in a voice which was slightly moved: "My daughter, embrace me!"

At the voice of her mother, Calebasse awoke from her apathy, raised her head, and with a gesture of indignation, exclaimed: "If there is a hell, may you go there, cursed one!"

"My daughter, embrace me!" said the widow again, advancing a step.

"Do not approach me; you have ruined me!" exclaimed the unfortunate girl, throwing forward her hands, to repulse her mother.

"Pardon me!"

"No! no!" said Calebasse, with a convulsed voice; and her strength being exhausted by the effort, she fell back, almost senseless, into the arms of the aids.

A cloud passed over the impassible brow of the widow for an instant her dry and burning eyes became moist, and at that moment encountered the gaze of her son.

After a slight hesitation, as if she had yielded to some struggle in her own breast, she said to him: "And you!"

Martial rushed, sobbing, into his mother's arms.

"Enough!" said the widow, overcoming her emotion, and releasing herself from the embrace of her son; "the gentleman is waiting," she added, pointing to the executioner: and she walked rapidly towards the chair, in which she seated herself resolutely. The spark of maternal sensibility, which, for a moment, had lighted up the dark abyss of that soul, was suddenly extinguished.

"Sir!" said the veteran to Martial, "do not remain here; come with me."

Martial, bewildered with horror and affright, unconsciously followed the soldier.

The two aids had conveyed to the chair the agonised daughter. One of them supported her almost lifeless body, while the other bound her hands behind her back with the cords, in intricate knots, and fastened a cord also around her ancles, sufficiently long to permit her to walk.

This operation was, at the same time, strange and horrible; one might have said that the long thin cords—which were scarcely distinguishable in the shade—with which the men were silently binding the sentenced woman, passed through their hands like the web of a spider entangling the victim before devouring it.

The executioner and his active aid were binding the widow with equal agility, but not the least change came over her features. At intervals, however, she coughed slightly. When the culprit was thus rendered unable to move, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a long pair of shears, said to her, with politeness: "Have the kindness, madame, to bend your head."

The widow stooped down her head, saying: "Our family are good customers; you have had my husband once, now you have his wife and daughter."

The executioner, without reply, gathered in his hands the long grey locks of the culprit, and began cutting them off very close, particularly on the back part of the head.

"This will make the third time that my head has been dressed in the course of my life," said the widow, with a gloomy sneer. "The day of my first communion, when a veil was put on my head; my wedding-day, when they put orange blossoms in my hair; and, finally, to-day—is it not so, death's barber?"

The executioner remained silent. The culprit's hair was so thick and hard, the operation lasted so long, that the locks of Calebasse were entirely removed, before those of her mother were half off.

"You do not know what I am thinking about," said the widow to the executioner, casting another look towards her daughter.

The executioner continued to preserve silence. Nothing was heard but the clashing of the scissors, and a sort of hiccup, which now and then expanded Calebasse's breast. At that moment, a priest with a venerable face was seen in the corridor. He approached the director of the prison, and conversed with him in a low voice. This holy man came to make a

final effort to arouse the widow from her appalling insensibility.

"I think," continued the widow, after a few moments, observing that the executioner made no reply—"I think that my daughter, whose head is going to be cut off, was the prettiest child in the world when she was five years old. Her hair was auburn, and her cheeks rosy and white. Who could have foretold that ——" And after a moment's silence, she exclaimed, with a burst of laughter, and an indescribable expression of countenance: "What a farce this life is!"

As she spoke these words, the last locks of the culprit fell from her shoulders.

"It is done, madame," said the executioner, civilly.

"Thank you. I will recommend you to my son Nicholas," said the widow; "you will have his hair to trim one of these days."

A jailor now came and whispered a few words to the condemned woman.

"No! I have already said no!" she replied roughly.

The priest heard these words, raised his eyes to heaven, clasped his hands, and disappeared.

"We are about to start, madame; will you not take something to eat?" said the executioner.

"Thank you—to-night I will take a mouthful of earth:" and the widow, after this new sarcasm, stood upright. Her hands were bound behind her back, and a cord sufficiently long to allow her to walk, connected her ancles. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner and his aid kindly volunteered to assist her. She made a gesture of impatience, and said, in a harsh and imperious tone: "Do not touch me—I have a sure foot and a good eye; on the scaffold, you will see that I have a good voice, and whether it speaks any words of repentance."

And the widow, attended by the executioner and his aid, left the dungeon, and entered the corridor. The two other assistants were obliged to support Calebasse upon her chair. She was in a dying condition. After having passed through the long hall, the gloomy procession ascended a stone staircase, which led to an exterior yard. The sun poured down its warm and radiant beams upon the high walls which surrounded the yard; the sky was beautifully blue; the air was mild and balmy; never was there a more pleasant and smiling day. In the yard a piquet of *gendarmerie* was seen, a hackney-coach, and a long narrow vehicle, painted yellow, drawn by three post-horses, which neighed in a sprightly manner, and shook the bells on their harness. The entrance into the vehicle was through a door behind, as in an omnibus, which gave occasion to a final joke from the widow.

"The conductor will not say, 'All full,'" said she. She then ascended the carriage as actively as her manacles would permit. Calebasse, almost expiring, was placed in the vehicle opposite her mother, and the door was locked.

The driver of the hackney-coach had fallen asleep, and the executioner shook him.

"Excuse me, master," said the driver, waking up and jumping from the seat; "but a carnival night is a hard one. I had just taken to the Vendanges de Bourgogne, a crowd of dissipated dogs, with their women, who were singing merrily all the way. When you engage me by the hour, I ——"

"Enough!—follow that vehicle to the Boulevard Saint-Jacques."

"Excuse me, master; an hour ago to the Vendanges, and now to the guillotine!—that proves that trips may follow, but not resemble each other," as some one says.

The two carriages, preceded and followed by a picquet of *gendarmerie*, proceeded on full trot towards Paris.

We have presented the toilet scene of the condemned, in all its revolting truthfulness, because we believe that this picture offers frightful arguments, both against the penalty of death, and against the application of that penalty, as well as against the effect that is produced by its example upon the populace.

Although despoiled of this formidable and religious preparation, which should, at least, accompany every act of severe chastisement that the law inflicts, in the name of a vindictive public, the toilet, notwithstanding it is the most frightful accompaniment of an execution, is concealed from the multitude. In Spain, on the contrary, the condemned remains exposed during three days, in a lighted chapel, with his coffin constantly before him; priests utter the prayers of the dying, and the church bells toll night and day the funeral knell.

It is evident that this species of initiation towards an approaching death, tends to terrify the most hardened criminals, and to inspire, with a salutary terror, the throng that crowd against the grating of the funeral chapel. Besides, the day of punishment is a day of public mourning; the bells of every parish sound the mournful service of the dead; the culprit is slowly conducted to the scaffold, with gloomy and imposing pomp; his coffin constantly before his eyes, priests, walking by his side, chant the prayers of the dead; then comes the religious fraternity, followed by mendicant friars, who ask of the crowd contributions in behalf of the repose of the victim's soul—an appeal to which the crowd never remains deaf.

All this is, undoubtedly, frightful; but it is rational and imposing. It shows that a creature of God is not cut off in the midst of life, as a bullock is butchered. It makes the multitude think—who always judge of the crime by the extent of the penalty—that homicide must imply guilt of the deepest stain, since its punishment disturbs a whole city.

This fearful spectacle gives rise to grave reflections, and inspires salutary terror. What there is barbarous in this human sacrifice, is concealed by the terrible majesty of the execution. But what effect can be produced by such preparation for the guillotine as we have described? Early in the morning, the culprit is taken from his cell, bound and thrown into a close carriage; the driver whips his horse, arrives at the scaffold, the knife is set in motion, and the head falls into a basket, in the midst of the revolting sneers and jokes of the most corrupt part of the populace. Where is the fear inspired by this rapid execution? As the execution is almost private, in a place entirely removed, and performed with sly precipitation, the city is ignorant of the bloody and solemn act. No information is given there, that upon this day a man is to be executed. The theatres continue to echo with songs and laughter; the crowd proceed, indifferent to the event. As far as society, humanity, and religion are concerned, it is important that judicial homicide should be committed in the presence of all. We repeat again, and shall continue to repeat it—here is the knife, but where is the crown? By

the side of the penalty exhibit the reward; then only will the lesson be complete and productive. If, on the day succeeding the one on which the populace have seen the blood of a great criminal stain the scaffold, they could see the good man remunerated and exalted, they would as much dread the punishment of the first, as they would be eager to deserve the triumph of the second. Terror seldom prevents crime, and never inspires virtue. As the influence of the penalty of death upon the condemned themselves has been considered, it is either braved with audacious contempt, or they meet it almost senseless and lifeless with fear, or they present their head to the axe with profound and sincere repentance. Consequently, for those who sneer at it, the penalty is insufficient—useless to those who are already morally dead—and too aggravated for those who sincerely repent.

Society kills the murderer, not for the purpose of compelling him to suffer, not on the principle of the *lex talionis;* but it destroys his life to prevent him from doing further injury: it kills him, that the example of his punishment may restrain future murderers.

We believe that the penalty is too barbarous, and does not inspire sufficient terror. We believe that, in a few crimes, like parricide, or others of equal enormity, blindness and perpetual confinement in a solitary cell, would sufficiently disarm the culprit, and would punish him in a manner a thousand times more formidable, while giving him also an opportunity for repentance.

If the reader doubts this assertion, we could place before him many facts evincing the horror of hardened criminals at solitary confinement. Is it not known that some of them have committed murder in order to be condemned to death, preferring that penalty to a solitary cell? What would then be their terror, when blindness, combined with solitude, destroyed all hope of escape—a hope which they often cherish, and sometimes realise, and when imprisoned in dungeons, and loaded with chains. We think, also, that the abolition of capital punishment will be one of the forced consequences of the penitentiary system; the dread which solitude inspires in the generation which throng our prisons and galleys being so great, that many of those incorrigible men prefer death to being secluded in a cell. It will then be, doubtless, necessary to suppress capital punishment, in order to deprive them of that last and frightful alternative.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARTIAL AND CHOURINEUR.

Before continuing our story, we will say a few words upon the relations recently established between Chourineur and Martial.

When Germain had been released from prison, Chourineur easily proved that he had robbed himself. He confessed to the judge the object of this singular transaction; and his freedom was granted, after being justly and fairly admonished by the magistrate.

Not having as yet discovered Fleur-de-Marie, and desiring to recommend this new act of devotion on the part of Chourineur, to whom he was already indebted for his life, Rodolph, for the purpose of gratifying his new *protégé*, had lodged him in the hotel of the Rue Plumet, promising to attach him to his suite when he returned to Germany. We have stated that Chourineur evinced for Rodolph a blind and stubborn attachment, such as a dog evinces for his master. To dwell under the same roof with the prince, to see him occasionally, and to wait with impatience a new opportunity for making further sacrifices in his behalf, was the very extent of Chourineur's happiness and ambition; for he a thousand times preferred such a condition, to the possession of money, or the farm in Algeria which Rodolph had placed at his disposal.

But now that the prince had found his daughter, his plans were totally changed. Notwithstanding the lively gratitude he felt towards the man who had saved his life, he could not resolve to carry with him to Germany this witness of Fleur-de-Marie's first abasement. With a deep desire, however, to grant Chourineur's wishes to the fullest extent, he had again had him brought before him, and announced to him that he expected a new proof of his attachment. At these words, the countenance of Chourineur brightened; but it soon became clouded with dismay, when he learned from the prince, not only that he could not be allowed to follow him to Germany, but that he must quit the hotel that very day. It is useless to recount the brilliant remunerations that Rodolph offered to Chourineur—the money that was destined for him—the deed of the farm in Algeria—indeed, much more if he wished it—the whole was at his disposal. Chourineur, struck to the heart, refused all; and, for the first time in his life, perhaps, the man wept. It was only after the most urgent demands of Rodolph, that he finally consented to accept his first offers.

On the next day, the prince had Louve and Martial brought to him, and, without making known to them that Fleur-de-Marie was his daughter, he asked them to state what he could do for them—whatever wish they might have should be granted. Observing their hesitation, and remembering that Fleur-de-Marie had spoken of the somewhat wild tastes of Louve and her husband, he proposed to the bold housewife either a large sum of money, or the half of such sum and a farm in full cultivation, lying adjacent to the one he had purchased for Chourineur; both of them, with their rude and energetic natures, and endowed with good and noble instincts, would sympathize the more readily with each other, since both had cause for seeking solitude—the one on account of her past life, the other on account of the crimes of his family.

The prince did not deceive himself: Martial and Louve accepted his proposal with evident delight; and, through the intervention of Murphy, being brought in contact with Chourineur, all three felicitated themselves upon the relations that their neighbouring residence in Algeria promised.

In spite of the deep sadness in which he was plunged, or rather, the cause itself of that sadness, Chourineur, affected by the cordial advances of Martial and his wife, responded with an overflowing heart—a sincere friendship soon united the future colonists. People of this temper judge quickly, and become attached to each other as suddenly. Louve and Martial being unable, notwithstanding their affectionate efforts, to draw their new friend from his gloomy lethargy, now relied solely upon the incidents of the voyage, and the activity of their future life, to distract him from his melancholy; for, once in Algeria, he would be obliged to inform himself as to the method of cultivating the land that

had been given to him, the former proprietors, agreeably to the conditions of the sale, being compelled to give it their attention for another year, that the new possessor might be enabled to take proper charge of it at the expiration of that time.

After these preliminary remarks, it will be understood that, informed of the painful interview required of Martial, in obedience to his mother's last request, Chourineur wished to accompany his new friend to the door of Bicetre, where he waited for him in the coach that conveyed them, and which reconducted them to Paris, after Martial, with frightful feelings, had quitted the dungeon, where the terrible preparations for the execution of his mother and sister were going on.

The countenance of Chourineur had completely changed. The expression of boldness and happiness, which ordinarily characterised his masculine face, had given place to a deep melancholy; even his voice had lost its roughness; an affliction of the soul, an affliction till then unknown to him, had bruised and fractured his energetic nature. He looked upon Martial with compassion.

"Courage!" he said to him; "you have done all that a brave man can do. It is over. Think now of your wife, of the children whom you have prevented from becoming criminal, like their father and mother: this evening we shall leave Paris never to return, and you will never hear mentioned that which afflicts you."

"Notwithstanding, Chourineur, you see, after all, that it is my mother and sister."

"Well, what would you have? So it is; and when things are, we must submit to them," said Chourineur, choking down a sigh.

After remaining silent an instant, Martial replied to him, cordially: "I ought to console you also, poor fellow! always so sad."

"Always, Martial."

"Well, I and my wife both expect, that when once out of Paris, it will no longer be so with you."

"Yes," said Chourineur, after reflecting a moment, and shuddering, in spite of himself; "if I leave Paris."

"Why, we leave this evening."

"You mean you and your wife—you leave this evening."

"And you, then — have you altered your mind?"

"No."

"What, then?"

Chourineur was again silent; then he answered, with an apparent effort over himself: "Look, Martial, you will shrug your shoulders, I know, but I wish to tell you everything; if anything happens to me, it will, at least, prove that I am not mistaken."

"What do you mean?"

"When M. Rodolph asked us, if we would like to go to Algeria, and be neighbours there, I did not wish to deceive you—neither you nor your wife—I have told you what I once was——"

"Say no more about that, you have already paid for it. You are as good and as brave as any one; but, I suppose that, like myself, you would rather live at a distance, thanks to our generous protector, than remain here, where, however independent and honest we may be, we shall ever be reproached—you for a fault which you have paid for and repented of, and I for the crimes of my parents, for which I am not responsible. But, between us, the past is over, and well over. Do not be uneasy; you can rely upon us, as we can rely upon you."

"Between us, perhaps, the past is all over; but, as I told M. Rodolph, you see, Martial, there is something above—there—and I have killed a man!"

"It is a sad misfortune; but, you know, at that moment you was not yourself—you was like a madman; and, besides, you have saved the lives of others, and that should balance it."

"Listen, Martial; if I speak to you of my misfortune, hear why. Formerly, I had a dream, frequently, in which I saw the serjeant that I killed; for a long time I was not troubled with this dream, but, last night, I had it!"

"A mere chance."

"No! it announces some misfortune to me, to-day."

"You talk nonsense, my good friend."

"I have a presentiment that I shall not leave Paris."

"Again, you are wanting in common sense. Your grief at quitting your benefactor, the thought of conducting me to Bicetre, to-day, where such sad things awaited me, all agitated you during the night; then your dream naturally returned to you."

Chourineur shook his head sadly. "It returns to me just on the eve of M. Rodolph's departure—for he leaves to-day."

"To-day?"

"Yes; yesterday, I sent a person to his hotel, not daring to go myself; he had forbidden me. They said, that the prince would leave this morning, at eleven o'clock, by the way of the Barrière de Charenton; as soon as we reach Paris, I shall station myself there, for the purpose of seeing him for the last time—the last!"

"He appeared so kind, that I understand why you like him."

"Like him!" said Chourineur, with deep and concentrated emotion. "Ah! yes, indeed! I Would be willing, Martial, to sleep upon the ground, to eat black bread, be his dog, anything, to be where he is. I ask nothing more. It was too much, he did not wish it."

"He has been so generous to you."

"That is not the reason why I like him so much; it is because he told me I had a heart and honour; yes, at a time, too, when I was savage as a beast; when I looked upon myself as the vilest of the vile, he made me understand that there was something good in me. Yet, when my punishment was over, I repented; and after suffering misery upon misery, without stealing, I worked with courage to gain an honest living, without wishing to harm any one —although everybody regarded me as a perfect brigand; which was by no means encouraging."

"It is true, often to maintain yourself, or keep you in a good path, only a few words of encouragement are necessary."

"Just so, Martial; and when M. Rodolph said those words to me, faith, they made my heart beat strong and proud! Since then, I would leap into the fire to do good. Let an opportunity come, you will see! And for that, thanks to whom? thanks to M. Rodolph!"

"It is exactly because you are a thousand times better than you were, that you ought to have no bad presentiments. Your dream amounts to nothing."

"Well, we shall see. It is not that I seek some misfortune purposely—there can be none

greater than that which has happened—to see M. Rodolph no more, believing, as I did, that I should never quit him again. After my own way, of course, I should have ever been ready to serve him, body and soul. Never mind! Perhaps he is wrong. After all, Martial, I am but a worm of the earth by the side of him. Yet it sometimes happens that the smallest can be useful to the greatest. If such should be the case, I shall never in my life forgive him, for depriving himself of me."

"Who knows? Perhaps you will see him again, some day."

"Oh, no! he said to me: 'My good fellow, you must promise me never to attempt to see me again; that will be doing me a service.' You know, Martial, I made the promise. And on the honour of a man, I will keep it! But it is hard."

"Once down there, by degrees, you will forget your grief. We will work; we will live contented and alone, like good farmers, except sometimes, we will have a few shots with the rifle at the Arabs; and so much the better, for that will suit both my wife and myself. Oh! she's a madcap, that Louve!"

"As to the rifle, Martial, there I'm at home," said Chourineur, becoming less sad. "I am a bachelor, and have been a soldier."

"And I a poacher."

"But as to you, you have a wife and two children, to whom you are like a father. I—I have only my skin: and since it can no longer be a shield to M. Rodolph, I care but little for it. So, you see, if there is any fighting to be done, I am the one concerned."

"That concerns both of us."

"No, only me; thunder and Mars! give me the Bedouins."

"Well, I would rather hear you talk so, than as you did just now. Come, Chourineur, we will be real brothers; and you may entertain us with your sorrows, if they last, for I have mine also. To-day's journey I shall remember for a long time in my life; a mother and sister cannot be seen, as I have seen mine, and be forgotten. You and I are alike in too many things, not to go well together. We neither of us turn up our noses at danger; so we will be half farmers and half soldiers. There is hunting also down there; we will hunt: if you wish to live entirely alone, you can do so, and we will be your neighbours; if not, we will all live together. We will bring up the children like brave folks; and you will be almost their uncle, and we will be brothers. Does that please you?" said Martial, extending his hand to Chourineur.

"It does, my brave Martial; and more than that, sorrow shall kill me, or I will kill it, as they say."

"It will not kill you. We will keep watch down in our desert, and every evening we will say: '*Brother, thanks to M. Rodolph;*' that will be our prayer for him."

"Hold, Martial; what you say is a balm to my soul."

"Well, that cursed dream! you will never think of it again, I hope?"

"I will try."

"Very well, then; you will come after us at four o'clock? The diligence leaves at five."

"All right; but here we are almost in Paris. I will stop the coach, and go on foot to the Barrière de Charenton. I will wait there to see M. Rodolph pass."

The coach stopped, and Chourineur descended.

"Do not forget; at four o'clock, my good comrade!" said Martial.

"At four o'clock."

Chourineur had forgotten that it was the day of the Carnival, and he was much surprised at the spectacle, at once odd and frightful, that presented itself to his sight, as he passed over a part of the outer boulevard, which he had taken for the purpose of reaching the Barrière de Charenton.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FINGER OF GOD.

CHOURINEUR in a few moments was hurried along, in spite of himself, by a compact crowd, a stream of populace, who were descending from the low taverns of the Faubourg de la Glacière, and crowding towards the entrance of that barrier, with the view of scattering themselves upon the Boulevard Saint-Jacques, where the execution was about to take place. Although it was broad day, the resounding music of the orchestra of the towers, and above all, the sonorous vibrating of the *cornets à pistons* were heard in the distance.

The pencil of Callot, of Rembrandt, or of Goya, is required to convey an idea of the strange, hideous, and almost fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all—men, women, and children—were clad in old masquerading costumes; those who could not obtain such a luxury, wore upon their garments rags of flashing colours; a few of the more youthful were wrapped in female frocks, torn and soiled by mud; the faces of all branded by debauchery and vice, and hardened by intoxication, brightened with savage joy at the thought, that after a night of intemperate dissipation, they would have an opportunity of witnessing the death of two women, for whom the scaffold was already prepared.* There were assembled the base and filthy scum of the population of Paris, that immense cohort composed of bandits and abandoned women, who earn, by crime, their daily bread, and who, well fed, return nightly to their dens.†

The outer boulevard being very narrow at this spot, the crowd was so dense and compact as to absolutely check the circulation. Notwithstanding his athletic strength, Chourineur was obliged to remain immoveable in the midst of it. He resigned himself to his position. The prince would leave the Rue Plumet at ten o'clock, he had been told, and therefore would not pass the Barrière de Charenton before eleven; it was not yet seven o'clock. Although he had but lately been compelled to associate with the degraded classes of this populace, Chourineur, on finding himself again among them, experienced an unconquerable disgust;—urged on by the pressure of the immense throng to the wall of one of the grog-shops, that swarm on the boulevards, through the open windows of which escaped the stunning sounds of an orchestra of brass instruments, he became the unwilling witness of a strange spectacle. In a vast lower room, occupied at one extremity by the musicians, and surrounded by benches and tables covered by the remnants of a repast, by broken plates and over-

* The execution of Norbert and Desprès took place in 1843, on the day after the Carnival.

† According to M. Frégier, that excellent historian of the dangerous classes of society, there are in Paris, about thirty-thousand persons who exist solely by theft.

turned bottles, a dozen men and women in disguise, and in a state of intoxication, were surrendering themselves with frantic passion to that wild and obscene dance called the *chahut*, in which a small number of the habitual patrons of these places took no part until at the end of the ball, when the municipal guards on duty had retired. Among the dissolute couples who figured in this saturnalian festival, Chourineur observed two who received applause over all others, owing to the revolting audacity of their attitudes, their gestures, and their words. The first couple was composed of a man and woman; the former was partially disguised as a bear, by means of a vest and pantaloons made of black sheep-skin. In the place of the head of the animal, which was probably too troublesome to carry, was substituted a kind of cowl, of long hair, which entirely covered the face; two holes at the light of the eyes, and a large slit before the mouth, allowed the wearer to see, to breathe, and to speak. The man thus masked, was one of the prisoners who escaped from La Force, among whom where Barbillon and the two murderers who where arrested at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, at the commencement of this story. This man was Nicholas Martial, the son and brother of the two women for whom the scaffold was prepared at the distance of a few steps. Urged into this act of atrocious insensibility and audacious boldness, by one of his companions, a dreadful bandit, who had also escaped, and was disguised, this wretch dared, with the aid of this transformation, to enter into the last pleasures of the Carnival.

The woman who danced with him was dressed as a sutler; she wore a round-topped leather hat, trimmed with torn ribbons; a kind of vest of faded red, ornamented with three rows of brass buttons, like a hussar's; a green petticoat, and white calico pantaloons: her black hair fell in disorder over her forehead; her ghastly and livid features were stamped by boldness and impudence.

Opposite to these dancers was one not less depraved. He was a tall man, disguised as Robert Macaire; he had so besmeared his bony face with soot, as not to be recognised; besides which, a broad bandage covered his left eye, and the white globe of the right eye, contrasting with his black face, rendered him still more hideous. The lower part of Squelette's face (for he has undoubtedly been recognised already), disappeared in a high cravat, made of an old red shawl. His head covered by a grey, worn-out, thread-bare and crownless hat; clad in a ragged green coat, pantaloons patched in a thousand places, and tied round the ancles with twine, this assassin assumed the most immodest and grotesque postures of the *chahut;* he was darting right and left, backwards and forwards, folding and unfolding his long limbs as hard as iron, with so much vigour and elasticity, that they resembled steel springs in motion.

His female partner in the dance—a worthy coryphœus of those degrading orgies—a tall, and nimble creature, was dressed as a *débardeur*, her head covered by a powdered wig, surmounted by a military cap, from beneath which, a large cue was seen, and wearing a vest and pantaloons of green velvet, with an orange scarf tied round her body, and its long ends floating behind her back. A large, masculine, and vile-looking woman—the ogress of the *tapis-franc*—seated upon one of the benches, held upon her knees the tartan cloak of this creature, and that of the sutler, while they were endeavouring to rival Squelette, and Nicholas Martial, by their loose attitudes and motions.

Among the other dancers, was discovered a young cripple, representing the devil in his dress, by means of a black knit shirt, which was much too large for him, red drawers, and a horrible grinning mask of a green colour. In spite of his deformity, the little monster possessed surprising agility; his precocious depravity reached, if it did not surpass, that of his frightful companions; he frisked about with as much freedom as any of them, before a fat woman, who was disguised as a shepherdess, and who excited his immodest gambols, by her excessive bursts of laughter.

No accusation being brought against Tortillard (he has also been recognised), Bras-Rouge having been temporarily retained in prison, the youth, at the request of his father, had been claimed by Micou—the receiver of stolen goods of the Passage de la Brasserie, who had not been informed against by his accomplices.

To obtain an idea of the secondary characters in the scene which we are endeavouring to paint, imagine everything that is most vile, shameless, and monstrous in this rapacious, sanguinary, audacious, and atheistical bacchanal, which showed itself more and more hostile to social order, and to which we have desired to draw the attention of the reflecting, in terminating this recital. Can this last horrible exhibition symbolise the imminent peril which incessantly threatens society? Yes! let us reflect that this unity and increase of a race of thieves and murderers, is a living protest against repressive laws; and above all, against the *preventive measures of a foreseeing legislation*, and of *vast preservative institutions*, destined to watch over and protect, from their infancy, the morals of these unhappy and abandoned creatures, who have been led astray by examples of the most frightful character. Again, these disinherited beings, whom God has made neither better nor worse than his other creatures, would not fester thus incurably, but in the mire of misery, ignorance, and beastliness, through which they are dragged from their birth.

Still more excited by the laughter and applause of the crowd that pressed against the windows, the actors in these abominable orgies that we are describing, cried out to the orchestra to play a last *galop*. The musicians, delighted at the idea of ending a setting so painful to their lungs, yielded to the general wish, and played most energetically a *galoping* air of a hurried and rapid measure. As the vibrating harmony of the brass instruments became louder, the excitement redoubled; all the dancers crowded together, and following Squelette and his partner, commenced whirling round, and giving utterance to the most savage howlings. A thick dust, created by the furious stamping, rose from the flooring of the room, and cast a sort of reddish and peculiar cloud upon this vortex of entangled men and women, who were revolving with a dizzy rapidity. Excited by wine, by their own cries and movements, it was no longer intoxication only, it became frenzy and delirium; they required more room, and Squelette cried out in a panting voice: "Clear the way by the door there! we are going out upon the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the crowd, heaped up

against the windows, "a *galop* to the Barrière Saint-Jacques."

"It will soon be time for chopping the two women."

"How droll it is! the executioner will kill two birds at once."

"With the *cornet à piston* as an accompaniment."

"We'll dance the *contredanse* of the guillotine."

"The woman without a head, lead the way!" cried Tortillard.

"That will make the victims feel merry."

"I will take the widow for a partner."

"I the daughter."

"That will put old Charlot in good spirits."

"He will dance the *chahut* upon his shop, with his apprentices."

"Death to honest folks! Hurrah, for thieves and assassins!" cried Squelette, in a roaring voice.

These jests and menaces, accompanied by obscene songs, cries, and shoutings, had terribly increased by the time Squelette and his band had opened for themselves, by their impetuous and headlong violence, a large space in the centre of the compact crowd. The *mêlée* then became frightful; the howlings, imprecations, and boisterous laughter, appeared no longer human. The tumult was suddenly increased by a new incident: the carriage in which the condemned were enclosed, with its escort of cavalry, was discovered in the distance, at the angle of the boulevard, and the whole of this populace rushed in that direction, uttering cries of ferocious satisfaction. At the same moment, the crowd was overtaken by a courier, coming from the Boulevard of the Invalids, and galloping towards the Barrière de Charenton. He was clad in a light blue vest, the seams of which were heavily laced with silver; but as a sign of mourning, he wore black pantaloons under his high-topped boots; his cap, also laced with silver, had round it a bandage of crape; upon the blinds of the bridle were seen in relief the royal arms of Gerolstein. The courier put his horse upon a walk; but his progress becoming more and more embarrassed, he was obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the crowd of which we have spoken. Although he cried out to the throng to clear the way, and guided his horse with the utmost precaution, shouts and threats were soon uttered against him.

"Does the fellow want to mount upon our backs with his camel?"

"What a quantity of trinkets he is covered with!" cried Tortillard, from under his green mask.

"If he troubles us, let's pull him off!"

"And cut off the tackle on his vest, and melt it!" cried Nicholas.

"You will be ripped open, if you are not quiet, you ugly rascal!" added Squelette, to the courier, seizing his bridle; for the crowd had become so dense, that the bandit had given up his project of dancing to the barrier.

The courier, a vigorous and resolute man, raised the handle of his whip, and said to Squelette: "If you do not let go my horse's bridle, I will cut your face."

"You! you villain?"

"Yes; my horse was walking; I cried, clear the way; you have no right to stop me. My lord's carriage is behind me; I already hear the whips; let me pass."

"Your lord!" said Squelette; "what is he to me? I will put an end to him, if I please; I have never killed a lord, and I have a great mind to do it now!"

"There are no longer any lords. *Vive la Charte!*" cried Tortillard, humming those verses, "Forward, let us march against their cannons;" and suddenly clinging to one of the courier's boots, with all his weight, he made him stagger in his saddle. A severe blow from the handle of the whip, upon the head of the young cripple, punished his audacity. Immediately the mob, enraged, rushed upon the courier. It was in vain that he dug his spurs into his horse's side, for the purpose of urging him forward, and disengaging himself; he could only succeed in drawing his hunting knife. Dismounted, and struck down, in the midst of the furious cries and howls of his assailants, he would have been killed upon the spot, if the arrival of Rodolph's carriage had not diverted their brutal rage.

For some moments the four post-horses, harnessed to the prince's carriage, had been walking; one of the two footmen, who were in mourning (on account of Sarah's death), had prudently descended from the back seat, and was holding one of the doors of the vehicle, which was very low. The postilions, while admonishing the crowd to clear the way, were advancing with precaution.

Rodolph was dressed in deep mourning, as also was his daughter, one of whose hands he held within his own, while regarding her with a look of affectionate tenderness. The sweet and charming face of Fleur-de-Marie was encased in a small riding-hood, of black crape, which gave additional effect to the soft whiteness of her complexion, and the brilliant gloss of her auburn hair; it seemed as though the azure of the clear sky was reflected from her large eyes, their colour was of such a mild and limpid blue. Although a sweet smile upon her face expressed calmness and happiness, when she gazed upon her father, a slight shade of melancholy, and sometimes even of unaccountable sadness, cast their gloom over the features of Fleur-de-Marie, when the eyes of her father were withdrawn from her.

"You regret that I compelled you to rise so early, and hastened the hour of our departure," said Rodolph to her, smiling.

"Oh no, father, this morning is so beautiful."

"I thought that our journey would be better divided in leaving at an early hour, and that you would be less fatigued. Murphy, my aide-de-camp, and the carriage which contains your women, will overtake us at our first halting-place, were we shall repose."

"Kind father, it is I—I ever, who occupy your thoughts."

"Yes, mademoiselle, and without reproach. it is impossible for me to indulge in any other thought," said the prince with a smile; then adding, with a burst of tenderness: "Oh! I love you so much, I love you so much; quick, your forehead."

Fleur-de-Marie leaned towards her father, who pressed his lips with delight on her lovely brow.

It was at this moment that the carriage approached the crowd, and commenced advancing slowly. Rodolph, astonished, lowered the glass, and said in German to the footman, who was standing near the door: "Well, Frantz, what is the matter? what is the tumult?"

"My lord, there is such a crowd, that the horses can no longer proceed."

"And what is the cause of the crowd?"

"My lord ——"

"Well!"

"It is your highness ——"

"Speak on."

"My lord, I just heard say, that there is to be an execution yonder."

"It is frightful, indeed!" cried Rodolph, throwing himself back into one corner of the carriage.

"What is the matter with you, my father?" said Fleur-de-Marie, with deep anxiety.

"Nothing—nothing, my child."

"But those threatening cries, do you not hear them? they approach. What does it all mean?"

"Frantz, order the postilion to return, and reach Charenton by another route, it matters not which," said Rodolph.

"It is too late, my lord; we are in the midst of the crowd; they have stopped the horses. They are bad-looking men."

The footman could say no more. The mob, excited by the sanguinary bravadoes of Squelette and Nicholas, all at once surrounded the carriage. Notwithstanding the exertions and the threats of the postilion, the horses were stopped; and Rodolph discovered on all sides, and level with the doors, nought but savage, furious, and menacing countenances, and, towering above all, the tall figure of Squelette, who was advancing towards the door.

"Take care, my father!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, throwing her arm around Rodolph's neck.

"It is then you, who are the lord!" said Squelette, thrusting his hideous head even into the carriage.

At this insolence, Rodolph, had it not been for his daughter's presence, would have given way to his natural impetuosity of character; but he restrained himself, and answered calmly: "What do you wish? Why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because we please," said Squelette, placing his bony hands upon the edge of the door. "Each one in his turn: yesterday, you trampled upon the mob; to-day, the mob will trample upon you, if you stir."

"We are lost, father!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie, in a low voice.

"Do not be uneasy; I understand it," said the prince; "it is the last day of the Carnival. These men are intoxicated; I will get rid of them."

"We must make him get out, and his woman also," cried Nicholas. "Why do they trample on the poor?"

"You appear already to have drunk much, and to wish to drink more," said Rodolph, drawing his purse from his pocket. "Here's this for you; do not stop my carriage any longer:" and he gave his purse a toss.

Tortillard caught it, flying.

"Come, you are about travelling; your pockets must be crammed; shell out more money, or I will kill you. I have nothing to risk; I demand your money or your life, in open day," said Squelette, completely intoxicated by wine and furious rage, and at the same time opening the carriage door suddenly.

The patience of Rodolph was at an end; anxious for Fleur-de-Marie, whose fright increased every moment, and presuming that a vigorous movement would impose upon the wretch, whom he believed to be only drunk, he leaped from the carriage for the purpose of seizing Squelette by the throat. The latter first drew himself back suddenly, then snatching from his pocket a long dirk, he threw himself upon Rodolph. Fleur-de-Marie, seeing the weapon raised against her father, uttered a painful scream, and leaped from the carriage into his arms. It would have been a fatal moment for her and her father, had not Chourineur—who at the commencement of the fray recognised the livery of the prince—succeeded, by superhuman efforts, in reaching Squelette. At the moment when the latter raised his dirk against the prince, Chourineur arrested the arm of the brigand with one hand, and with the other he seized him by the collar, and half-overturned him backwards. Although surprised at the unexpected movement, Squelette recovered himself, and recognising Chourineur, he cried out: "The grey blouse man of La Force! This time I will finish you!" and precipitating himself with fury upon Chourineur, he plunged the dagger into his breast.

Chourineur tottered, but did not fall: the crowd sustained him.

"The guard—there's the guard!" cried many voices in alarm.

At these words—at sight of the murder of Chourineur, the whole of the compact crowd, fearing that they might be compromised by the assassination, dispersed as if by enchantment, and fled in every direction. Squelette, Nicholas Martial, and Tortillard, disappeared also.

When the guard arrived, guided by the courier, who succeeded in escaping when the mob abandoned him for the purpose of surrounding the prince's carriage, there remained left on this melancholy scene, Rodolph, his daughter, and Chourineur, weltering in his own blood. The two footmen were seated upon the ground, with their backs against a tree.

All this passed a thousand times more rapidly than it is possible to relate it, at a few steps from the tavern from whence Squelette and his gang rushed forth.

The prince, pale and agitated, folded the fainting Fleur-de-Marie in his arms, while the postilions repaired the harness which had been partially broken in the scuffle.

"Be quick," said the prince to his men, who were engaged in assisting Chourineur. "Carry the unfortunate man into the tavern. And you," he added, addressing the courier, "leap upon the seat, and proceed at full gallop to the hotel, for Doctor David; he was not to leave until after eleven o'clock, and will be found there."

A few moments afterwards, the horses left at full speed, and the two domestics carried Chourineur into the lower room—the place of the late orgies—and where were still found some of the females who had participated in them.

"My poor child," said Rodolph to his daughter, "I will conduct you to a chamber in this house, and you will await me there; for I cannot abandon to the sole care of my servants, that brave man, who has just saved my life a second time."

"Oh! father, pray do not leave me!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, seizing the arm of Rodolph; "do not leave me alone, I should die of fright: I will accompany you wherever you go."

"But this frightful scene!"

"Thanks to that man, you yet live, father; permit me at least to join you, that I may thank him and console him."

The prince was in a state of great perplexity;

his daughter had evinced so much fear at being left alone in a room of this vile tavern, that he concluded to enter with her into the lower part, where Chourineur had been conducted. The master of the tavern, assisted by several women, who were still remaining there—among whom was the ogress of the *tapis-franc*—had hastily laid the wounded man upon a mattress, and staunched his wound with napkins.

Chourineur opened his eyes, at the moment Rodolph entered. At the sight of the prince, his features, of a deadly paleness, revived; he smiled painfully, and said, in a low voice: "Ah! M. Rodolph, how happy a circumstance it was, that I happened to be present."

"As brave and devoted as ever!" said the prince, in a desponding tone—"again you have saved me!"

"I was about to go to the Barrière de Charenton, for the purpose of taking a parting look of you; happily, I found myself stopped here by the crowd—besides, it must have happened. I told Martial, I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment!"

"Yes, M. Rodolph—the dream of the serjeant—that night I had ——"

"Banish such thoughts; have hope; your wound will not prove mortal."

"Oh, yes! Squelette has struck sure. Never mind, I was right I told Martial, that a worm of the earth like me, could sometimes be useful to a great lord like you."

"But it is my life! my life! that I again owe to you."

"We are quits, M. Rodolph. You told me, that I had a heart and honour. Those words, you see—Oh! I am suffocating—my lord—without you—command—do me the honour—to—take me by the hand—I feel that I am going."

"No, it is impossible!" cried the prince, leaning over Chourineur, and pressing the icy hand of the dying man in his own. "No; you will live! you will live!"

"M. Rodolph—you see there is something—above—I have killed—with a blow of the knife," said Chourineur, in a stifled voice, that was growing weaker and weaker.

At this moment, Fleur-de-Marie, whom he had not before perceived, attracted his gaze. Astonishment was depicted on his countenance; he made a movement, and said: "Ah!—my God!—Goualeuse."

"Yes!—she is my daughter!—she blesses you for having preserved her father's life."

"She—your daughter!—here. That reminds me of our first acquaintance, M. Rodolph—and those finishing blows—with the fist—but—that blow with the knife—will also be—the finishing blow. I have stabbed—stabbed—it is right."

He then drew a deep sigh, and threw his head backwards. He was dead.

David and the squire entered.

"David," said Rodolph, drying his tears, and pointing to Chourineur, "is there no hope left?—my God!"

"None, my lord," answered the doctor, after a moment's examination.

During that moment, a frightful and silent scene had passed between Fleur-de-Marie and the ogress, whom, as yet, Rodolph had not observed.

When Chourineur pronounced, in an under tone, the name of Goualeuse, the ogress, raising her head quickly, saw Fleur-de-Marie. The horrible woman had already recognised Rodolph; they called him *my lord*, he called Goualeuse his *daughter*. Such a sudden metamorphose filled the ogress with amazement. She steadily fastened her eyes, in stupid bewilderment, upon her former victim.

Fleur-de-Marie, pale and alarmed, seemed fascinated by her gaze. The death of Chourineur, the unexpected appearance of the ogress, had just awakened, more painfully than ever, the remembrance of her first degradation, and it appeared to her an ominous foreboding.

From that moment, Fleur-de-Marie was struck by one of those presentiments, which often occasions, upon characters such as her own, an irresistible influence.

* * *

In a short time after these sad events, Rodolph and his daughter left Paris for ever.

EPILOGUE.

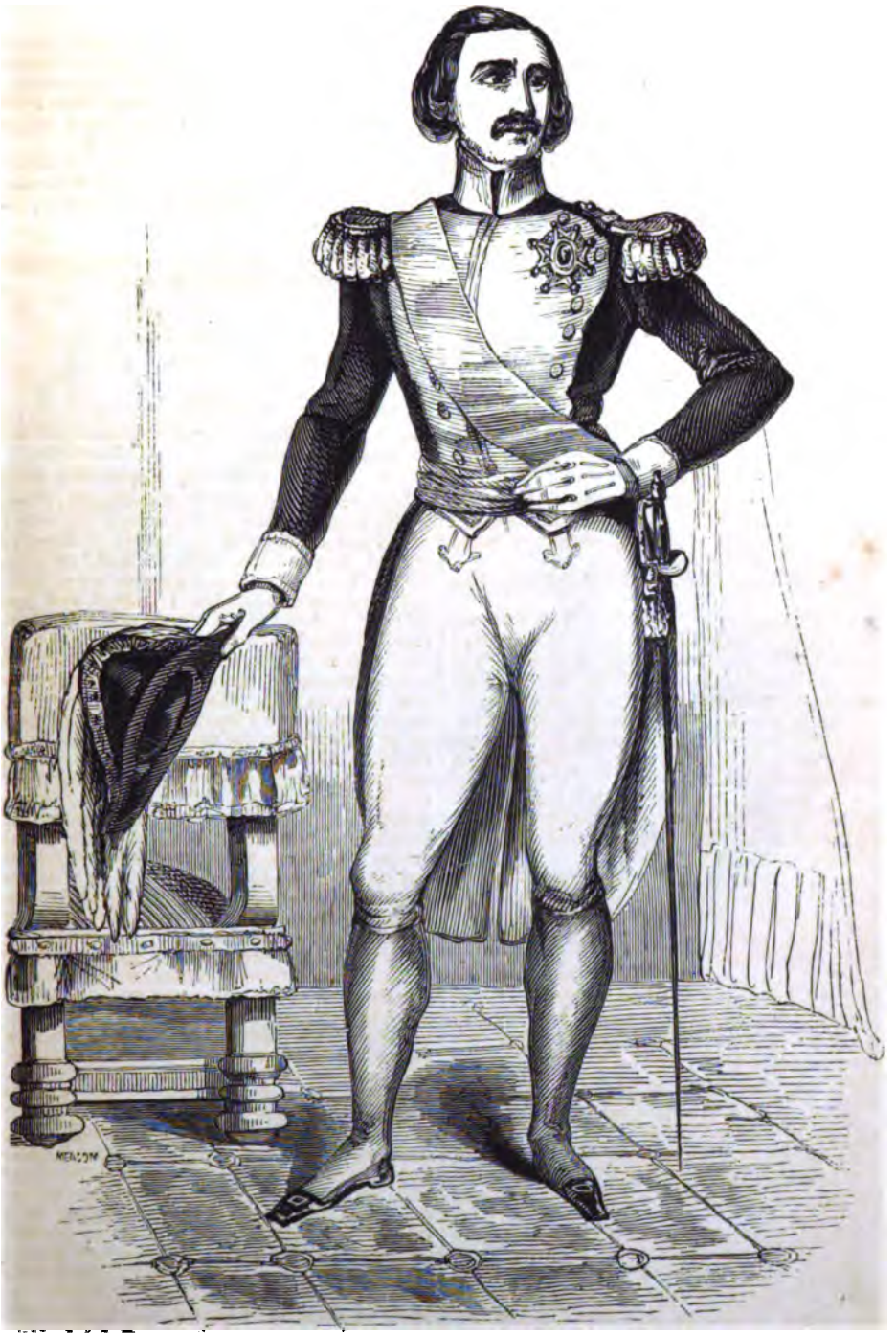
GEROLSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

LETTER FROM PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN OLDENZAAL TO THE COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINSKI.

Oldenzaal, August 25th, 1840.

I ARRIVED at this place from Gerolstein, where I have been spending three months in the society of the grand duke and his family. I expected to find here a letter from yourself, my dear Maximilian; and you can imagine my surprise and disappointment, when I learned that you will still be detained for several weeks in Hungary. I have been unable to write to you during the last four months, from my ignorance of your address, thanks to your original and adventurous way of travelling. You promised, however, when we parted at Vienna, that you would meet me at Oldenzaal on the first of August. I must, therefore, relinquish the pleasure of seeing you, and yet I never in my life was so anxious to pour my heart into yours, my dearest and oldest friend; for, although we are very young, our friendship dates from our infancy. How shall I inform you of the complete change which the last three months have produced in me? It has been one of those periods which determine the whole future existence of a man. Judge if your presence and counsel are not indispensable. I know that in this emergency no necessity can be so imperious, no interest so important as to detain you from me; you will come to me, you will come to me, I am convinced, my dear Maximilian, for I cannot come to you. My father's very precarious health recalled me from Gerolstein, and, as it daily becomes more feeble, it will be impossible for me to leave him. I have so much to relate, that I fear I shall become prolix, for I have to write the most eventful as well as the most important epoch of my life. By a singular and lamentable accident, we have been separated from each other during this period—*we*, the inseparables, the brothers, the evangelists of a thrice-holy friendship—we who are so gratified in affording to the world, in our persons, a proof that the Carlos and Posa of our Schiller are not ideal beings, but that we, like the immortal creations of the divine poet, are capable of experiencing the delights of a tender and reciprocal friendship. My friend, my friend, why were you not by my side? For the last three months my heart has overflowed with mingled emotions of rapture and indescribable sadness; and I was



RODOLPH OF GEROLSTEIN.

[Death of Fleur-de-Marie.]

alone—I still am alone. I am sure of your pity, for you know the acuteness of my susceptibility—you have seen my eyes fill with tears at the artless recital of a noble action, at the simple beauty of a fine sunset, at the peaceful and serene repose of a starlit eve of summer. Do you remember, during our excursion last year to the ruins of Oppenfeld, our delightful reverie on the banks of the vast lake, on that night of unequalled beauty and romance? The evening to which I allude, was in strange contrast with the bloody duel which took place three days afterwards, when I refused your services as my second, for fear of the suffering I should endure on your account, if I happened to be wounded in your presence—the duel in which my second slew that young Frenchman, the Viscount Saint-Remy—the whole of it growing out of a gambling dispute. By the way, what has become of that dangerous siren whom the viscount brought to Oppenfeld, who was called, I believe, Cecily David? I anticipate your smile at the manner in which I wander among the reminiscences of the past, instead of approaching the serious confidence which I promised to impart. The reason is, that I shrink from disclosing it: I am well acquainted with your severity, and dread your rebukes—yes, rebukes—because, instead of acting with reflection and discretion—the discretion of a youth of twenty-one!—I have acted foolishly, or rather, I have not acted at all; I quietly surrendered myself to the stream, and allowed it to carry me away; and it is only since I returned from Gerolstein that I have, as it were, woke up from the delightful trance in which for the last three months I have been lulled. The wakening has nearly killed me! Well, my kind friend, my good Maximilian, I arm myself *with all my courage* to begin. I beg you will hearken to me with indulgence. I commence with my eyes

cast down, for I discern the severity of thy features—thou cynic!

Having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and sojourned here for some time with my father; and, his health being comparatively comfortable, he advised me to pay a visit to my excellent aunt, the Princess Jilianne, the superior of the convent of Gerolstein. I believe that I have already told you, my friend, that my grandmother was a first cousin of the grand duke's grandfather, and that his highness has always treated myself and my father as his most affectionate cousins. You are also aware, probably, that, during the long visit which the prince made to France, he intrusted my father with the government of the dukedom. I do not mention these circumstances in the spirit of vanity, but to explain to you the intimate terms on which I lived with the grand duke's family, during my sojourn at Gerolstein. Do you remember, that, while we were travelling on the banks of the Rhine, we heard that the prince had met in France the Countess Sarah Macgregor, and had married her *in extremis*, in order to legitimate the daughter which she bore him during their secret union, which was null on account of its informality, and its being contracted contrary to the wishes of the grand duke then reigning? The child thus solemnly acknowledged is the Princess Amelia,* of whom Lord Dudley, who had seen her at Gerolstein, spoke to us at Vienna in such a strain of enthusiastic compliment, which we regarded as so exaggerated. Who could have foretold, then, the events which have since occurred? I suppose that you already suspect my secret; but I will follow the order of my narrative, without anticipating the sequel. The convent of Sainte-Hermangilde, of which my aunt is the superior, is scarcely the eighth of a league from Gerolstein; the gardens of the convent stretch even to the gates of the city. A delightful mansion, distinct from the convent, was placed at my disposal by my aunt, who loves me with maternal tenderness. She informed me, that, on the day after my arrival, there was to be an audience and a fete, in consequence of the public and official announcement made by the grand duke, of his intended marriage with the Marquise d'Harville, who, a short time before, had arrived at Gerolstein in company with her father, the Count d'Orbigny.† Many people blamed the prince for not having again sought a royal alliance; his last wife was a daughter of the house of Bavaria; but there were others, in which number my aunt was included, who were pleased that he had sacrificed ambitious forms to his adoration of a young and amiable lady, allied to the most distinguished nobility of France. You know, also, that my aunt has always professed the greatest devotion to the grand duke; for no one is more capable than herself, of appreciating the eminent qualities of the prince.

"My dear child," said she, "the most gratifying sight which you will see at the audience, will be, beyond all comparison, the pearl of Gerolstein."

"To whom do you allude, my good aunt?"

"To the Princess Amelia."

"The daughter of the grand duke! I remember of hearing, at Vienna, Lord Dudley speak of her in strains which we regarded as poetical."

"At my age, and with the character which I sustain, and the situation which I occupy, one is little apt to be overcome with enthusiasm, you may rely on the calmness and impartiality of my opinion; and I assure you that I never knew a being more lovely and enchanting than the Princess Amelia. I should speak of her transcendant beauty, were she not endowed with charms superior to the loveliness even of her person—artlessness and dignity, grace and modesty, inseparably blended. From the first day of my introduction to her, I have been drawn towards the young princess by an involuntary sympathy. Nor am I alone. The Archduchess Sophia has been at Gerolstein for several days: she is the most proud and haughty princess that I ever knew."

"It is true. I am well acquainted with her keen and ironical temper: few people can endure its bitterness; she was avoided at Vienna, like the fire. Has the Princess Amelia found grace in her eyes?"

"The other day, she came here, after having visited the asylum which is under the protection of the young princess. 'Do you know one thing?' said this dreaded archduchess to me; 'I have a mind that is somewhat inclined to prose—have I not? Well, I am convinced that, if I lived long with the daughter of the grand duke, I should become perfectly harmless: her excellence is contagious.'"

"This cousin of mine seems to be a perfect enchantress," said I to my aunt, smiling.

"Her attractive quality, in my estimation, is the inseparable blending of the dignity of a princess with the modesty and amiability of an unpretending female, and which gives to the surpassing loveliness of her face, so serene and benignant an expression."

"The modesty of which you speak, my aunt, is certainly a very rare attribute with a princess so young, so beautiful, and so fortunate."

"You must reflect, that what increases the merit of the rare humility of the princess, is, that her elevation to the distinguished position to which she is entitled, is very recent."*

"In her conversation with you, my aunt, has the princess made any allusion to her past history?"

"No; but when a woman of my advanced years addressed her in the language of respect to which the daughter of my sovereign is entitled, her modest, dignified, and ingenuous reserve, mingled with gratitude and veneration, abundantly proved to me that she did not forget the past, in the distinguished position which she now occupied, and that she yielded to my age the same tribute which I paid to her rank."

"Indeed," replied I to my aunt, "very nice tact must be necessary to observe these delicate shades of character."

"The more frequently I have seen the princess, the stronger my convictions have become, that my first impressions in regard to her character were correct. Her charities and good works, since her arrival here, are almost incredible, and exceedingly interesting in a young woman of her

* The name of Fleur-de-Marie was connected, in the mind both of Rodolph and his daughter, with so many painful recollections, that the name of Amelia was given to her, which was one of the names of the grand duke's mother.

† To sustain the probability of our story, we must remind the reader, that the last sovereign princess of Courland was Mademoiselle Medeur, a lady no less remarkable for the rare superiority of her intellect, than for the charms of her character and the excellence of her heart.

* Rodolph had given out, upon his arrival in Germany, that Fleur-de-Marie, who was for a long time supposed to be dead, had never left her mother, the Countess Sarah.

age, especially as they display so much reflection and judgment. At her request, the grand duke has founded an asylum for young orphan girls of from five to six years old, and also for those of the same class who have reached their sixteenth year—an age so fatal to those who are exposed, at the same time, to temptation and want. The superintendents of this institution are nuns of my convent, descended from noble families. In my visits to this asylum, I have frequently had occasion to observe the almost idolatry of the poor, disinherited creatures for the Princess Amelia. She devotes a few hours every day to this establishment, which has been placed under her special protection; and the inmates and nuns not only regard the princess with respect and gratitude, as I have before said to you, but they almost worship her as a saint."

"Your princess seems, indeed, to be an angel, my dear aunt."

"Yes, an angel," she replied. "It is impossible for you to conceive of the touching kindness with which she treats her *protégés*. With what pious solicitude she watches over them! I never saw any one who was so skilful in administering relief to the unfortunate, without wounding their susceptibility. One would think that she was drawn towards this particular class of females, by some secret sympathy; and would you believe it?—although the daughter of a sovereign, she calls these girls by no other name than sister!"

I must confess to you, Maximilian, that, at these last words of my aunt, I could not restrain a tear. Do you not regard her conduct as touching and holy in the extreme? You know my sincerity, and I assure you that I repeat, word for word, the statements of my aunt.

"Since the princess," said I, "is so eminently endowed, I shall be greatly confused when I am introduced to her to-morrow. You know my diffidence, and you are also aware, that devotion of character has much more influence upon me than rank; and I am convinced that I shall appear to the princess most stupid and embarrassed."

"Come, come, be comforted, my child," said my aunt, smiling; "the princess will have pity upon you. Besides, you will not be to her a new acquaintance."

"What! I, my aunt?"

"Certainly."

"How can that be?"

"You remember that, at the age of sixteen years, you left Oldenzaal, to travel in Russia and in England, with your father, I had your portrait taken in the dress which you wore at the first dress ball that the grand duchess gave."

"Yes, my aunt; the dress of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our excellent artist, Fritz-Mokker, while delineating your features faithfully, not only reproduced a personage of the sixteenth century, but by a caprice of art imitated the style and the dress of the portraits of that epoch. A few days after her arrival in Germany, the Princess Amelia, having called upon me, with her father, observed your portrait, and asked me, with great earnestness, 'Whose was that charming face of olden time?' Her father made me a sign, and replied: 'That is the portrait of one of my cousins, who would now be, as you will observe by his costume, three hundred years old; but who, although still young, has given proofs of rare courage and excellence of heart. Is not intrepidity stamped upon his features, and is there not kindness in his smile?"

[I beg of you, Maximilian, not to shrug your shoulders in contempt, because I write such trifles concerning myself. You know that it is disagreeable to me; but the sequel af the narrative will show that these details, which, I am conscious, may appear ridiculous, are in fact essential. I will therefore bring this parenthesis to a conclusion, and proceed.]

"The Princess Amelia," continued my aunt, "duped by the innocent jest, coincided with her father's opinion as to the mild and daring expression of your countenance, after having given the portrait a closer scrutiny. When I went to see her at Gerolstein, afterwards, she asked me, smiling, what news I brought from my cousin of the olden time. I then confessed our deception, and said that the handsome page of the sixteenth century was only my nephew, the Prince Henry d'Herkausen Oldenzaal, now twenty-one years of age, captain of the Guards in the service of his majesty the emperor of Austria, and in every respect, with the exception of the costume, very much like the portrait. At these words," said my aunt, "the princess blushed, became thoughtful, as she almost invariably is, and has since made no inquiries of me about the portrait. You see, therefore, my child, that your face will not be an entirely new one to your cousin, as the grand duke calls you. I hope you will recover your confidence, and not dishonour your portrait," said my aunt, smiling.

This conversation took place, as I have already informed you, Maximilian, the day before I was to be presented to my cousin, the princess. I left my aunt, and returned to my own lodgings.

As I have never concealed from you any of my thoughts, good or bad, I will confess to you the foolish and absurd imaginings to which I surrendered myself, after this conversation with my aunt. You have frequently informed me, Maximilian, that I was entirely devoid of vanity. I believe that I must admit it, in order to continue the narrative without convicting myself of unparalleled presumption. When I was alone at home, recollecting the conversation of my aunt, I reflected with secret satisfaction, that the Princess Amelia had observed the portrait made six or seven years before, and had, in a few days afterwards, asked, in a pleasant manner, if there was any news from the cousin of olden time.

Nothing could be more foolish than to found any hope upon a circumstance so trifling. I confess it. But I have told you I should exhibit towards you the greatest frankness; and I am obliged to own, that the insignificant circumstance delighted me. The praises which a lady of my aunt's serious character had bestowed upon the princess, while they exalted her in my estimation, made me more sensible of the distinction which she had conferred upon me, or rather, which she had conferred upon my portrait. Looking back upon the past, I can hardly conceive how such rash hopes could be excited by such feeble praises. Although a relative of the grand duke's, and upon very cordial terms with him, it was impossible to have any well-grounded hope of a union with his daughter, even if she should reciprocate my passion, which was so improbable. Our family supports its rank with honour; but our property is very small, compared with the immense wealth of the grand duke, the richest prince in the German

Confederation. Besides, I was hardly twenty-one years of age—a mere captain of the Guards, without reputation, without any personal distinction: the grand duke could never think of me as a son-in-law.

These reflections should have guarded me against a passion which I did not yet feel, but of which I had, if I may so express myself, a strange presentiment. Alas! I surrendered myself to these puerile dreams. I still wore upon my finger a ring which had been given to me by Sheba, the grand countess, with whom you are acquainted; and, although I did not regard very highly this token of a childish and smothered passion, I determined to sacrifice it to my new love, and the poor ring disappeared in the rapid current of the river which flowed beneath my window. To describe to you the night which I passed, would be useless; you can yourself imagine it. I knew that the Princess Amelia was a blonde, and of exquisite beauty; and I endeavoured to fancy her features, her form, her general appearance, the sound of her voice, the expression of her eyes. I then thought of my own portrait, and recollected, with regret, that the artist had flattered me. I compared, with perfect despair, the picturesque costume of a page of the sixteenth century, with the plain uniform of a captain of the Guards of his Imperial Majesty. Some generous thoughts, some noble impulses, were mingled with all these singular vagaries. I was impressed with the transcendent excellence of the princess, who called the poor orphans under her protection her sisters, as my aunt had informed me. Although I have ordinarily a very humble opinion of myself, I was, on this occasion, conceited enough to believe that my portrait had made an impression upon the princess. I had good sense enough, however, to understand the distance which divided us, and yet I asked myself, with great anxiety, whether I was unworthy of the portrait.

I passed the night, and the following day, until the hour of audience arrived, in a very painful state of mind. I put on two or three different uniforms, without pleasing my taste, and I started for the palace of the grand duke, very much dissatisfied with myself. Although Gerolstein is but a short distance from the convent of Sainte-Hermangilde, during the short ride, a thousand thoughts assailed me. The fancies of the previous night, upon sober reflection, disappeared. A sad, but an irresistible foreboding, informed me that a crisis was approaching, which might influence my whole future life. I had a sort of foreknowledge that I should fall in love—that I should love devotedly, and but once; and that my affections being placed upon so worthy and exalted a being, my passion would be a hopeless and unhappy one. I was so much alarmed by this presentiment, that I ordered the carriage to be stopped, with the intention of going to the convent, and thence returning to my father, and leave with my aunt the task of apologising to the grand duke for my sudden departure from his dominions. Unfortunately, by one of those common accidents, the cause of which is inexplicable, my carriage was arrested at the entrance of the avenue which led to the palace. I motioned to the porter to give my people an order to return, when the Baron and Baroness Kaller, who, like myself, were going to court, perceived me, and caused their carriage to be stopped also. The baron, seeing me in uniform, said: "Can I be of any service to you, my dear prince? What has befallen you? Since you are going to the palace, come with us, if any accident has happened to your horses."

Nothing could have been easier—do you not think so, my friend?—than to find an excuse for quitting the baron, and regaining the abbey. Well, whether it was owing to irresolution, or to a secret desire to escape the determination which I had made, I answered with an embarrassed air, that I had given an order to my coachman to inquire at the palace-wicket, if visitors entered by the new pavilion or the marble court-yard. "They enter by the marble court, my dear prince," replied the baron, "for it is a grand gala reception. Order your carriage to follow mine, and I will show you the way."

You know, Maximilian, how much of a fatalist I am: I wished to return to the abbey, to spare myself the heartache which I anticipated; fate opposed it, and I resigned myself to my star. You have never seen, my friend, the grand duchal palace of Gerolstein? According to the report of all those who have visited the capitals of Europe, there is not, except at Versailles, a royal residence whose entrances and whole effect are more majestic. If I enter into any details on the subject, I must, in recalling at this hour its imposing splendours, ask myself why they did not immediately remind me of my own insignificance; for the Princess Amelia was the daughter of the sovereign master of the palace, of these guards, and all this magnificence.

The *court of marble*, a vast *hemicycle*, is so called because, with the exception of a circular road on which roll the carriages, it is paved with marble of all colours, forming magnificent mosaics, in the centre of which is constructed an immense basin of antique marble, fed by abundant waters, which incessantly fall into a lake of porphyry. This court of honour is on all sides adorned with a range of white marble statues of the finest workmanship, bearing torches of gilded bronze, from which spout forth floods of dazzling gas. Alternating with these statues, Medicean vases, elevated on their richly-sculptured stands, held huge laurel-roses, real blossoming trees, whose lustrous foliage, seen in the innumerable lights, gleamed and glittered with a metallic verdure. Carriages drew up in the midst of a double flight of steps, which ascended to the peristyle of the palace; at the foot of this staircase stood as sentries, mounted upon black horses, two chevaliers of the guards of the grand duke, who always chooses his soldiers from the most stalwart subalterns of his army. You, my friend, who are so much in love with soldiers, you would have been struck with the severe and martial aspect of these two colossals, whose cuirasses and casques of steel, after an antique pattern, without headpiece or mane, glistened in the light; these cavaliers wore blue coats with yellow collars, breeches of white buckskin, and heavy boots reaching above the knee. Since you are so fond of military details, I will add, that, at the top of the staircase, on each side of the door, two grenadiers of the duke's infantry regiment were on duty. Their appearance, save in the colour of their dress, was, I was informed, like that of Napoleon's grenadiers. After having traversed the vestibule, in which the liveried yeomen of the prince were stationed, halberds in hand, I mounted an imposing staircase, which terminated in a portico, ornamented with columns of jasper, and surmounted by a painted and

PRINCESS AMELIA.

gilded cupola. There two long rows of footmen were stationed. I afterwards entered the hall of the guards, at the door of which a chamberlain and an aid-de-camp on service are always to be found, charged with the duty of conducting to his royal highness, those who have a right to be particularly presented. My relationship, though distant enough, entitled me to that honour; an aid-de-camp ushered me through a long gallery, filled with gentlemen in court-dresses or in uniform, and ladies in full costume. While I lightly threaded this brilliant crowd, I heard words spoken which still further increased my emotion. On all sides, they were admiring the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelia, the charming looks of the Marquise d'Harville, and the truly imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who, newly arrived from Munich, with the Archduke Stanislaus, was soon to depart for Warsaw; but every one, while rendering homage to the lofty dignity of the archduchess, and to the gracious demeanour of the Marquise d'Harville, could not but acknowledge, that nothing could be more ideally perfect than the enchanting face of the Princess Amelia.

As I drew near the spot where the grand duke and his daughter stood, my heart was beating violently. At the moment when I reached the door of the *salon* (I forgot to tell you these was a ball and concert at the court), the illustrious Listz seated himself at the piano. An entire silence succeeded to the light murmur of conversation. While awaiting the conclusion of the piece, which the grand artist played with his accustomed superiority, I remained within the embrasure of a door. Then, my dear Maximilian, then, for the first time, I saw the Princess Amelia. Allow me to paint this scene, for it affords me unspeakable delight to revive such recollections.

Imagine, my friend, a vast *salon*, furnished with a royal sumptuousness, blazing with light, and hung with tapestry of crimson silk, along which ran a foliage of gold, embroidered in relief. In the first rank, upon large golden *fauteuils*, sat the Archduchess Sophia (the prince himself did the honours of the palace), on the left, the Marquise d'Harville, and on her right, the Princess Amelia. Standing behind them was the grand duke, wearing the uniform of a colonel of his guards; he seemed to be made young again by happiness, and no more than thirty years old; the military habit set off to advantage the elegance of his form, and the beauty of his features; near him was the Archduke Stanislaus in the costume of a field-marshal; then came the ladies of honour to the Princess Amelia, the wives of the great dignitaries of the court; and last, the dignitaries themselves. Must I tell you, that the Princess Amelia reigned over this glittering crowd, far less on account of her rank than her grace and beauty? Do not condemn me, my friend, until you have read the portrait. Though it must be a thousand times below the reality, you will understand my adoration—you will comprehend why, from the first moment I saw her, I loved her, and that the rapidity of my passion can be equalled only by its violence and duration.

The Princess Amelia, clad in a simple robe of white *moire*, wore, like the Archduchess Sophia, the great ribbon of the Imperial Order of Népomacéne, which had recently been sent to her by the empress. A band of pearls, encircling her noble and spotless brow, charmingly harmonised with two large folds of exquisite flaxen hair, which dropped upon her faintly-crimsoned cheeks; her delicious arms, whiter than the billows of lace from which they fell, were half concealed by gloves that extended to her dimpled elbows; nothing could be more perfect than her shape—nothing prettier than her little foot, cased in white satin. At the moment I saw her, her big eyes, of the purest blue, were deeply pensive; I know not whether at that instant she felt the subduing influence of some serious thought, or whether she was moved thus keenly by the sombre harmony of the music, played by Listz; but her half-smile seemed to me full of sweetness and an indescribable melancholy. With her head slightly bending towards her breast, she mechanically tore away the leaves of a huge *bouquet* of carnations and roses that she held in her hand. Never can I express to you what I then experienced; all that my aunt had told me of the ineffable goodness of the Princess Amelia recurred to my mind. Smile, my friend; but I could not prevent the tears that flowed to my eyes when I saw that young girl, so admirably beautiful, surrounded with honours, respected, yes, idolised by a father like her's, pensive and almost sad.

Maximilian, I have often said to you, that as I believe man incapable of tasting certain enjoyments, as it were, too complete, too immense for his contracted senses, also I believe certain beings to be too divinely endowed not to feel, at times, most bitterly, how they are *isolated* here below; and vaguely regret that exquisite delicacy, which exposes them to so many deceptions—to so many rude collisions with less elevated natures. It seemed to me, then, that the Princess Amelia experienced the influence of a similar thought.

Suddenly, by a strange chance (all is fatality in this affair), she turned her eyes to the place where I stood. You know how scrupulously etiquette and the hierarchy of ranks is observed with us. Thanks to my title, and to the ties of relationship which bind me to the grand duke, the people in the midst of whom I was at first placed, withdrew, so that I remained nearly alone, in the embrasure of the door of the gallery, and quite conspicuous to the first rank. It was owing to this circumstance that the Princess Amelia, awakening from her reverie, perceived, and, doubtless, recognised me, for she made a slight gesture of surprise, and blushed. She had seen my portrait in the abbey, at my aunt's house, and knew me; nothing could be clearer. The princess had hardly looked at me for a second, when I experienced so deep, so overwhelming an emotion, that my cheeks burnt as if they were on fire. I cast down my eyes, and so remained for several minutes, without daring again to raise them to the princess. When I ventured to do so, she was conversing, in a low tone, with the archduchess, who seemed to listen to her with the most affectionate interest. Listz, having put an interval of a few minutes between the two pieces he was to play, the grand duke took occasion to convey to him his approbation in the most gracious manner. The prince, in returning to his place, saw me, bowed with an air of great kindness, and spoke a few words to the archduchess, as he pointed me out to her. The latter, after having for an instant observed me, turned again to the grand duke, who could not

prevent himself from smiling as he replied to her, and then addressed his daughter. The Princess Amelia seemed to be embarrassed, for a deeper blush crimsoned her cheeks.

I was in torture; unhappily, etiquette did not suffer me to quit my station before the end of the concert, which soon recommenced. Two or three times, I stole a glance at the Princess Amelia; she appeared to me pensive and sad. My heart was wrung; I suffered for the slight annoyance which I thought I had occasioned. I can guess the cause. Doubtless, the grand duke had jestingly asked her, if she found in me any resemblance to her cousin of the olden time; and, in her ingenuousness, she had, perhaps, reproached herself for not having told her father that she had already recognised me. The concert ended, I followed the aid-de-camp; he conducted me to the grand duke, who kindly advanced to meet me, took me cordially by the arm, and said to the Archduchess Sophia, as he approached her: "I ask permission of your royal highness to present to you my cousin, Prince Henry d'Herkausen Oldenzaal."

"I have formerly seen the prince at Vienna, and I am happy to meet him here," answered the archduchess, before whom I bowed profoundly.

"My dear Amelia," continued the prince, addressing his daughter, "I present to you Prince Henry, your cousin; he is a son of the Prince Paul, one of my most venerated friends, whom I sincerely regret not to greet to-day at Gerolstein."

"Will you be so kind, sir, as to assure Prince Paul how sincerely I sympathise in my father's regrets, for I am always most happy to know his friends," answered my cousin, with a most graceful simplicity.

I had never before heard my cousin's voice; its tones were like those of the sweetest, purest, most melodious instrument—tones which vibrate on the most delicate chords of the soul.

"I trust, dear Henry," said the grand duke, "that you will tarry long with your aunt—a lady whom I respect as a son respects his mother. Come and see us often, without ceremony, in the afternoon; if we walk out, you can make one of the party; I have always loved you, because you have one of the noblest hearts I know."

"I am at a loss how to express to your royal highness, my gratitude for the kindly welcome which you have condescended to bestow upon me."

"Well, by way of testifying your gratitude," said the prince, smiling, "ask the hand of your cousin for the second *contredanse*, since the first belongs, by right, to the archduke."

"Will your highness vouchsafe this favour?" said I, bowing to the Princess Amelia.

"Address one another by the simple title of cousin," gaily said the grand duke; "ceremony should not be observed among relations."

"My cousin, will you do me the honour to dance the second *contredanse* with me?"

"Yes, my cousin," answered the Princess Amelia.

I know not, my friend, how to express the mingled happiness and sorrow with which the paternal cordiality of the grand duke inspired me. The confidence which he evinced, the affectionate kindness with which he had commanded his daughter and myself to substitute, for the formulas of etiquette, the titles of relationship and tender intimacy, aroused the liveliest gratitude; but, at the same time, I made a silent resolution (and faithfully have I kept it) never to utter a word which could make my cousin suspect the love I bore her; but I feared lest my emotion, my looks, should betray me. But, in spite of myself, the sentiment, though silent and hidden, as it ought ever to be, seemed a guilty one. I had time to make these reflections while the Princess Amelia was going through the first *contredanse* with the Archduke Stanislaus. Here, as elsewhere, this dance is nothing more than a kind of march to the music of the orchestra. Nothing could have displayed to greater advantage the serious grace of my cousin's demeanour.

I felt a joy, mingled with anxiety, as I waited for the moment when a pause in the dance would allow me to converse with my cousin. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my emotion, when I approached her as she stood by the side of the Marquise d'Harville. In reflecting upon the circumstances connected with the portrait, I thought that the Princess Amelia would partake of my embarrassment. I was deceived. I can remember, word for word, our first conversation; suffer me to repeat it to you.

"Will your highness permit me," said I, "to call you my cousin, as the grand duke has authorised me?"

"Certainly, my cousin," she gracefully replied; "I am always happy to obey my father."

"And I am most proud of this intimacy, since my aunt has taught me to know you—I mean, to appreciate you truly."

"My father has often spoken to me of you—and you will, perhaps, be surprised to know," she added, timidly, "that I knew you by sight, if I may so call it, immediately. The superior of Sainte-Hermengilde, for whom I feel the most respectful affection, one day showed my father and myself your portrait."

"In which I am represented as a page of the sixteenth century."

"Yes, my cousin; and my father was even deceitful enough to tell me that this portrait was the likeness of a relative of the olden time, and he said many kind things about that cousin. It seems that our family has reason to congratulate itself upon reckoning him among its connections of the present."

"Alas! my cousin, I am afraid that I bear but a faint resemblance to the flattering moral portrait which the grand duke deigned to draw of the page of the sixteenth century."

"You deceive yourself," naïvely answered the princess; "for at the end of the concert, as I chanced to look around the gallery, I recognised you instantly, notwithstanding the difference of costume." Then, wishing, doubtless, to change the subject of a conversation which embarrassed her, she said: "How admirable is the talent of M. Listz! is it not?"

"Admirable! and with how much pleasure you listened to him!"

"It seems to me that there is, in truth, a double charm in music without words. Not only do we enjoy the admirable performance, but we can adapt our passing thoughts to the melodies we hear, and make them, as it were, the accompaniment. I know not whether you comprehend me, my cousin?"

"Perfectly; our thoughts are always words with which we mentally accompany the music that we hear."

"That is it, that is it; you understand me;" said she, with a gesture of gracious satisfaction —"I feared that I could not express what I felt during the performance of that plaintive and touching melody."

"Thank God, my cousin, we have no words set to so sad an air."

Either because my question was indiscreet, and she wished to avoid a reply, or because she did not understand me, the Princess Amelia suddenly pointed out to notice the grand duke, who, with the duchess on his arm, was then walking among the dancers in the gallery.

"My cousin, look at my father—how handsome he is! how noble and excellent a deportment! With what attention all gaze upon him! It seems to me that the people love more than they revere him!"

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "it is not here alone, in the midst of his court, that he is beloved. If benedictions can resound to posterity, the name of Rodolph of Gerolstein will indeed be immortal."

My enthusiasm in thus speaking was most sincere, for you know, my friend, that the territory of the prince is rightly called, "The Paradise of Germany." It is impossible to describe the grateful looks of my cousin, when she heard me speak in this manner.

"Thus to appreciate my father," said she, "is to be worthy of the attachment which he feels for you."

"No one admires and loves him more than I do. Besides, in addition to those rare qualities which constitute a great prince, is he not endowed with that genius of goodness which makes a great prince beloved?"

"You know not how truly you speak!" cried the princess, with deeper emotion.

"Oh! I know it, I know it; and all whom he governs know it as well as I. They love him so much, that they are as much distressed by his misfortunes, as they are rejoiced at his happiness; the eagerness with which they came to pay their homage to the grand duchess, both approves the choice of his royal highness, and the worth of the future grand duchess."

"The Marquise d'Harville is as worthy as she can be of the love of my father; and this is the highest eulogium that I can bestow upon her."

"And you can, I doubt not, appreciate her justly; for you must have known her at Paris, my cousin."

Hardly had I spoken these words, when a sudden and indescribable shadow seemed to pass over the spirit of the Princess Amelia; she cast down her eyes, and, for a moment, her features wore an expression of sadness, which struck me dumb with astonishment. We were, then, at the end of the *contredanse;* the last figure separated me, for a moment, from my cousin. When, at length, I reconducted her to the Marquise d'Harville, it seemed to me that her features were still somewhat sad. I believed then, and I still believe, that my allusion to the sojourn of the princess in France, recalled the memory of her mother, and caused the painful sensation to which I alluded.

During the evening, I remarked a circumstance which might, perhaps, appear to you puerile, but which to me was a new proof of the interest with which this young girl was regarded by every one. Her head-band of pearls, being somewhat disarranged, the Archduchess Sophia, to whom she offered her arm, had the kindness to arrange the jewellery on her brow. Now, to one who knew the proverbial *hauteur* of the archduchess, such an attention on her part seemed scarcely credible: and indeed the Princess Amelia, whom I observed attentively at the moment, appeared at once so confused — so grateful—I might almost say so embarrassed, that a bright tear glistened in her eye. The condescension was not unappreciated.

Such, my friend, was my first *soirée* at Gerolstein. If I have described it to you in minute detail, it is because nearly all these circumstances have sooner or later been attended by results which materially affected my welfare.

I shall now be brief: I shall relate only a few of the chief facts concerning my frequent interviews with my cousin and her father.

Two days after the fête, I was one of a small party invited to the celebration of the grand duke's marriage with the Marquise d'Harville. Never did I see the countenance of the Princess Amelia more radiant and calm than during this ceremony. She regarded her father and the marquise with a sort of religious rapture, which invested her features with a new charm. Her charming appearance might have been said to reflect the unspeakable happiness of the prince and the Marquise d'Harville.

On that occasion, my cousin was very gay, and even witty. I gave her my arm during a promenade after dinner, in the palace-gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. She said to me, with reference to her father's marriage: "It seems to me that the happiness of those we love is even sweeter than our own; for there is invariably a shade of selfishness in the enjoyment of our own felicity."

If, my friend, I have selected this reflection of my cousin's from a thousand, it is that you may see into the heart of this adorable creature, who, like her father, has really a genius for goodness.

Several days after the grand duke's marriage, I had a long conversation with him: he made inquiries concerning the past, and my plans for the future: he gave me the wisest counsels, and the most flattering encouragement. He even told me several of his political projects, with a confidence, which, I confess, flattered my pride. In short, he said so much, that I scarcely know what to tell you. For an instant, a foolish idea crossed my mind; I supposed that the prince had discovered my love, and that, by conversing with me, he wished to examine my motives, sound my intentions, and perhaps lead me to some acknowledgment ——

Enough: this foolish notion did not last long; the prince closed our conversation with the remark, that the time for great wars had passed away; that I ought to profit by my name, my alliances, my education, and the intimate friendship which subsisted between my father and Prince Metternich, prime minister to the Emperor; that thus my career would be diplomatic instead of military; and that all the questions which had formerly been decided upon the battle-field, were now to be decided in council. He added, moreover, that the ancient traditions of tortuous and faithless diplomacy would give way to a large and philanthropic policy, keeping pace with the real interests of the people, who were daily becoming more thoroughly conscious of their rights; that an elevated, loyal, and generous spirit, might, within a few years, have

a great and noble part to play in political affairs, thus exerting an extensive and beneficial influence; and he finally offered me his sovereign protection and aid to further my views on entering public life.

You must see, my friend, that if the prince had intended to refer to his daughter, he would not have made such overtures. I thanked him for his offers with a lively gratitude, adding that I felt the value of his advice, and that I had determined to follow it.

I was careful, at first, that my visits to the palace should not be too frequent; but, thanks to the pressing invitations of the grand duke, I soon acquired the habit of going thither every day about three o'clock. He lived in all the charming simplicity which characterises our German courts. It was such life as they enjoy in the great mansions of England, rendered more attractive by the cordial simplicity and the delightful freedom of German manners. When the weather permitted, we took long rides on horseback with the grand duke, the grand duchess, my cousin, and their friends. When we remained at the palace, we occupied ourselves with music: I sang with the grand duchess and my cousin, whose voice had a tone of unequalled purity and softness, to which I never listened without feeling that the depths of my soul were stirred. At other times we visited, one after another, the wonderful collections of pictures and works of art, or examined the prince's libraries: you know that he is one of the most learned and clear-headed men in Europe. I as often returned to dine at the palace; and, on opera days, I accompanied the grand duke's family to the theatre.

Every day passed like a dream. Gradually, my cousin treated me with a familiarity quite fraternal. She never concealed the pleasure which my presence gave her: two or three times she begged me to accompany her when she went with the grand duchess to visit her orphan children, as some of her objects of charity were called; and she often spoke to me of my prospects with a maturity of judgment, and a serious, reflective interest, which, proceeding from a girl of her years, astonished me. She loved, also, to enquire concerning my childhood, and my mother, alas! always so deeply regretted. Every time I wrote to my father, she begged me to send him her remembrances; besides, as she embroidered splendidly, she gave me one day a beautiful piece of tapestry for him, at which she had been working for a long time. What shall I tell you, my friend? A brother and sister, meeting after long years of separation, could not have enjoyed an intimacy more sweet: and when, by some extraordinary chance, we happened to be alone, the arrival of a third person could never change the subject, or even tone, of our conversation.

You will perhaps be surprised, my friend, at such close intercourse between two young people; above all, when you think of the confessions I make to you. But the more confidence my cousin placed in me, and the more familiarity she extended to me, the more I watched myself, the more I restrained myself, lest I should live to see the end of this delightful friendship. And then, what increased my reserve still more, was, that the princess evinced, in all her intercourse with me, so much freedom, so much noble reliance, and, above all, so little coquetry, that I am well-nigh certain she never suspected my violent passion. There remains only one slight doubt on this subject, arising from a circumstance, which I shall tell you immediately.

If this fraternal intimacy had been destined to last for ever, perhaps my bliss would have been complete. But, from the very relish with which I enjoyed it, I feared lest some service, or the new career on which the prince wished me to enter, should soon call me to Vienna, or among strangers. I feared, in short, that, perhaps immediately, the grand duke would think of marrying his daughter in a manner worthy of her.

These thoughts became so much the more painful as the hour of my departure approached. My cousin soon remarked the change which was visible in my behaviour. On the very night of the day which separated us, she told me that, for some time, she had found me gloomy and abstracted. I endeavoured to evade her questions in such a way that she might not conjecture my meaning. I attributed my sadness to general ennui, without ascribing it to any particular cause.

"I cannot believe you," said she to me: "my father treats you almost like a son; all the world loves you: for you to be unhappy, is to be ungrateful."

"Well," said I, in reply, scarce able to subdue my emotion, "this is not ennui; it is disappointment: yes, it is a deep disappointment that preys upon me."

"And why? What has happened to you?" she inquired, with interest.

"You have told me, this moment, cousin, that your father treats me like a son, and that all the world loves me. Well, ere long, I must renounce all these precious attachments: I must, in short ——leave Gerolstein; and, I confess to you, this thought comes like a blight over my hopes."

"And the remembrance of those who are dear to us? Is that, then, nothing, my cousin?"

"Doubtless; but years—events—bring such unforeseen changes!"

"There are, at least, affections which do not change. That which my father has ever shown for you—that which I feel for you, is of the number, and you know it well! We shall never forget one another—we are brother and sister!" continued she, raising her large, blue eyes, moist with tears.

This look deprived me of self-command—I was on the point of betraying myself: fortunately, I regained my composure.

"It is true our affections *do* last!" I said, with embarrassment; "but our positions change. When I return, cousin, some years hence, do you believe that this intimacy, the charm of which I so much value—do you believe it will still continue?"

"Why should it not?"

"Because—then you will doubtless be married, cousin: you will have other duties; and —you will forget your poor brother!"

I protest to you, my friend, that this was all I said to her; I have still to learn, whether, in these expressions, she discovered an avowal which offended her, or whether, like myself, she was painfully struck with the inevitable changes which the future would necessarily cause in our acquaintance. But instead of answering me, she remained silent for a moment, seemingly overwhelmed in thought; then, rising hastily, with a pale and agitated expression, she left the room, after having for a few seconds examined

some embroidery which the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her maids of honour, was working, in the recess of one of the windows of the room in which we had held our conversation.

On the evening of that day, I received from my father another letter, requiring my immediate presence here. The next morning, I went to take leave of the grand duke; he told me that my cousin was rather indisposed, and that he would make my adieus to her; he folded me to his heart with all a father's affection, regretting my hasty departure, and that it should have been occasioned by the ill-health of my father; and then, with great kindness, recalling to my mind the advice he had given me as to the new career which he very earnestly recommended to my adoption, he added that, on my return from the mission I was undertaking, it would afford him the most lively pleasure again to receive me at Gerolstein.

I fortunately found, upon my arrival here, my father's health in a much better state than I had expected; he still keeps his bed, and is extremely feeble, but I no longer feel very serious uneasiness on his account. Unfortunately, he perceived my despondency—my gloomy taciturnity. He has several times, but ineffectually, entreated me to confide to him the cause of my great sadness.

I sat up with him—we were alone; thinking that he slept, I gave vent to my grief; I could not restrain the tears which flowed silently from my eyes, while thinking of the happy days I had passed at Gerolstein. He saw me weeping, for he only dozed now and then, and I was completely absorbed by my melancholy thoughts; he questioned me with touching goodness; I attributed my sorrow to the uneasiness I had felt regarding his health, but he was not the dupe of this subterfuge.

Now that I have told you all, my dear Maximilian, tell me, is not my fate most hopeless—what should I do? what resolve upon?

Oh! my friend, I cannot tell you the anguish that I suffer. What will come of it? Oh God! all is lost! I am the most miserable of men, if my father do not renounce the project he has formed.

I will tell you what has just occurred.

A short time ago, I was about to close this letter, when, to my great consternation, my father, whom I thought in bed, came into the room where I was writing; he saw upon my desk the first four pages of my letter to you; I was almost at the conclusion.

"To whom are you writing at such length?" said my father, smiling.

"To Maximilian, my father."

"Oh!" rejoined he, with an expression of affectionate reproach, I know *he* enjoys your full confidence—*how happy must he be!*"

He pronounced these last words in so heart-broken a tone, that, touched by his sorrowful accents, I, without reflecting for a moment, handed him the letter, saying: "Read it, my father."

My friend, he read every word that I had written. Can you imagine what he said to me, after several minutes of meditation.

"Henry, I shall write to the grand duke, and inform him of all that passed while you remained at Gerolstein."

"I conjure you, my father, do not think of it."

"Is all you have related to Maximilian scrupulously true?"

"Yes, every word."

"In that case, your conduct hitherto has been irreproachable—the prince will know how to appreciate it. But you must not for the future show yourself unworthy of his confidence, and you would do so, were you to abuse his kind offer by returning to Gerolstein with the intention, perhaps, of gaining the affections of his daughter."

"Can you for a moment believe, my dear father——"

"I believe that you love her passionately; and passion, sooner or later, becomes a bad counsellor."

"Is it possible, my father, that you will write to the prince?"

"That you love his daughter most devotedly."

"In the name of heaven, let me entreat you not to do so!"

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I love her to idolatry; but——"

My father interrupted me. "That being the case, I shall write to the grand duke, and in your name ask the hand of his daughter."

"Such pretensions on my part would be utter madness."

"It is true. I must, nevertheless, frankly make this proposal to the prince, stating the reasons which impel me to it. He received you with the greatest hospitality—his goodness towards you was almost paternal, and it would be unworthy of either of us were we to deceive him. I know his exalted soul; he will consider my proceeding as that of an honest man. Should he refuse to give you his daughter, and that is almost indubitable, he will know that, henceforward, should you return to Gerolstein, you can no longer live on the same intimate footing with her. You have freely shown to me, my son," added my father, with great goodness, "the letter you wrote to Maximilian. I am now acquainted with every circumstance; it is my *duty* to write to the grand duke, and I shall write to him instantly."

You know, my friend, that my father is the best of men, but he has an inflexible tenacity of will, in whatever regards that which he conceives his *duty*. Judge of the anguish, the fears I now suffer. Although the step he is about to take is no more than frank and honourable, I am not the less agitated. How will the grand duke receive this mad proposal? will he not be amazed at my temerity? and will not the Princess Amelia feel hurt at my having allowed my father to take such a resolution without first obtaining her approval?

Pity me, my friend; I know not what to think; I am like one gazing into an abyss; my head turns round.

I hastily close this long letter; I will soon write to you again. Again I say, pity me, for verily I fear I shall go mad, should the fever which now agitates me last much longer. Adieu, adieu. With all my heart, and for ever yours,

HENRY D'H. O.

* * *

We shall now conduct our readers to the palace of Gerolstein, where Fleur-de-Marie had resided since her return from France.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS AMELIA.

THE apartment occupied by Fleur-de-Marie (we will not call her the Princess Amelia, save

in an *official* sense), in the grand-ducal palace, had, by the care of Rodolph, been furnished in a style of perfect taste and elegance. From the balcony of the young girl's oratory were descried afar the twin towers of the convent of Sainte-Hermangilde, which, springing upwards from immense masses of verdure, were themselves overtopped by a lofty, forest-crowned mountain, at the base of which rose the abbey. It was a beautiful summer morning; and Fleur-de-Marie suffered her eyes to wander over the splendid landscape which stretched afar. Her hair was folded on her brow, and she wore a high robe of a white and spring-like fabric, lightly streaked with blue; a large collar of simple cambric, falling back upon her shoulders, displayed the ends and tie of a little silken cravat, of the same blue colour as the cincture of her robe. Seated in a wide *fauteuil* of sculptured ebony, the back of which was covered with deep crimson velvet, her elbow supported on one of the arms of the seat, and her head slightly bent forward, she leaned her cheek on her fairy-like hand, in whose snowy texture lightly wandered veins of a delicate azure. The languishing attitude of Fleur-de-Marie, her paleness, the fixedness of her eye, the bitterness of her half-smile, betrayed a profound melancholy. After the lapse of a few minutes, she drew a long and sorrowful sigh; then, letting the hand fall which supported her cheek, she bowed her head more lowly upon her breast. The unfortunate seemed weighed down by the burden of some heavy calamity.

At that moment, a woman of an advanced age, of a grave and distinguished countenance, and dressed with an elegant simplicity, entered almost timidly into the oratory, and lightly touched Fleur-de-Marie to attract her attention. The latter, awaking from her reverie, quickly raised her head, and, saluting the new comer with a motion full of grace, said: "What do you wish, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your highness that my lord desires to visit you; he will be here shortly," answered the lady of honour, with respectful formality.

"Indeed! I am surprised that I have not yet been permitted to embrace my father. Every morning do I await his coming with so much impatience! But I hope it is not owing to any indisposition of Mademoiselle d'Harlein, that I have, for two days in succession, had the pleasure to see you at the palace, my dear countess?"

"That your highness may have no solicitude on this subject, I will say that Mademoiselle d'Harlein begged me to be her substitute for to-day; to-morrow she will resume her service near your highness, who will deign to excuse this change."

"Certainly, for I shall be no loser by it; having had the pleasure of your society for two successive days, my dear countess, I shall for the next two days have Mademoiselle d'Harlein near me."

"Your highness is so gracious," answered the lady of honour, again bowing lowly, "that your kindness encourages me to solicit a favour ——"

"Speak, speak; you know my anxiety to gratify you!"

"It is true that your highness has for a long time made me familiar with obligations; but the present is one of so painful a nature, that I should not have courage to approach it, did it not involve a most meritorious action; I rely, moreover, upon the extreme indulgence of your highness."

"You have not the slightest need of my indulgence, my dear countess; I am always most gratified for any opportunity to do a little good."

"My petition relates to a poor creature, who unhappily quitted Gerolstein before your highness had founded that excellent and charitable establishment for the relief of young girls, either orphan or abandoned, and utterly unprotected from the storm of evil passions."

"And what has she done? What do you require for her?"

"Her father, a very adventurous person, went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to a precarious existence. The mother died; the daughter, scarcely sixteen years old, left to her own guidance, fled from the country to Vienna with a seducer, who soon deserted her. As it always happens, this first step on the pathway of vice conducted the unhappy girl to an abyss of infamy. In a short time, she became like many other wretched victims, a disgrace to her sex——"

Fleur-de-Marie cast down her eyes, blushed, and could not conceal a slight shudder, which did not escape the notice of the lady of honour. The latter, fearful of having wounded the chaste feelings of the princess by speaking to her of such a creature, continued with embarrassment: "I beg your highness a thousand pardons. I have, doubtless, shocked you by drawing your attention to so wicked a life; but the unhappy wretch manifests so sincere a repentance, that I have ventured to solicit a little pity for her."

"And you are right. Go on, I pray you," said Fleur-de-Marie, suppressing her sorrowful emotion; "all errors are worthy of commiseration, when they are followed by repentance."

"So it happened in this instance, as I have observed to your highness. After two years of abominable sin, grace touched the soul of this deserted girl. Overtaken by a tardy remorse, she has come home again. It so happened that, on her arrival here, she took lodgings at a house which belongs to a worthy widow, endeared to every one by her mildness and piety. Encouraged by the holy sympathy of the widow, the poor creature has confessed all her faults, avowing a just detestation of her past life, and her desire to purchase, at the expense of the severest penitence, the privileges of entering a religious house, where she can expiate her sins, and merit their forgiveness. The worthy widow, in whom she confided, knowing that I had the honour to serve your highness, wrote to me to recommend this miserable girl; so that, by the all-powerful intervention of your highness with the Princess Julianne, the superior of the abbey, she may hope to be admitted as a serving-sister in the convent of Sainte-Hermangilde; she asks, as a favour, that she may be employed in the most painful toils, so that her penitence may be rendered more deserving. I often conversed with the woman before allowing myself to implore your highness's compassion, and I am firmly convinced that her repentance will be lasting. It is neither want nor age which has brought her back to virtue; she is scarcely eighteen, she is still very beautiful, and she possesses a small sum of money, which it is her desire to devote

to some charitable purpose, if she can obtain the favour which she solicits."

"I take upon myself the charge of your *protégé*," said Fleur-de-Marie, with difficulty repressing her emotion; so much did her own past life resemble that of the unhappy one, for whom her charity had been implored. She then added: "The repentance of this poor outcast is too praiseworthy not to be encouraged."

"I am at a loss how to express my gratitude to your highness. I hardly dared to hope that you would interest yourself so kindly for a being like this."

"She has sinned—she repents," said Fleur-de-Marie, in accents of commiseration and unspeakable sadness; "it is just that we should pity her. The more sincere her remorse, the more dreadful must be her suffering, my dear countess."

"I think I hear my lord," suddenly exclaimed the lady of honour, without observing the profound and increasing emotion of Fleur-de-Marie.

Rodolph had, in fact, entered the antechamber of the oratory, holding in his hand an enormous *bouquet* of roses. At the sight of the prince, the countess discreetly withdrew. Hardly had she disappeared, when Fleur-de-Marie threw herself upon the neck of her father, and reclined her forehead upon his shoulder. In that posture she remained several moments without speaking.

"Good morrow, good morrow, my darling child," said Rodolph, embracing his daughter with the fondest affection, and not perceiving her grief. "Look at this bunch of roses! What a beautiful harvest I have reaped for you this morning! This prevented me from coming sooner. I do not think that I ever brought you a more magnificent *bouquet!* Look here!" And the prince, still holding the *bouquet*, made a slight retrograde movement, so as to disengage himself from the embrace of his daughter, and to look upon her; but seeing the tears gushing from her eyes, he tossed the *bouquet* upon a table, took Fleur-de-Marie's hand in his own, and cried: "You weep. My God! what is the cause?"

"Nothing, my dear father," said Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears, and trying to smile upon Rodolph.

"I conjure you, tell me what it is—what has happened to distress you?"

"I assure you, my father, that it is nothing which should give you uneasiness. The countess came to implore my intercession in behalf of a poor woman—so interesting—so unfortunate—that, in spite of myself, I was deeply moved at the recital of her story."

"Is this true? Is it only that?"

"Nothing more," said Fleur-de-Marie, taking from the table the flowers that Rodolph had flung there. "But how you spoil me!" added she; "what a magnificent *bouquet!* and every day, you bring me one just like this, culled by your own hands."

"My child," said Rodolph, contemplating his daughter with anxiety, "you are concealing something from me. Your smile is mournful and constrained. I again conjure you to tell me what it is that grieves you. Do not think of the *bouquet*."

"Oh! you know, dear father, the *bouquet* is my delight every morning; and then I love roses so much! I have always loved them so much! You remember," added she, with a heart-breaking smile, "you remember my poor little rose-bush, the dried fragments of which, I always kept?"

At this painful allusion to the past, Rodolph exclaimed: "Unhappy child! my suspicions, then, are well-founded? In the midst of the splendours which surround you, you still sometimes recall that dreadful period? Alas! I had fondly trusted that I had caused you to forget it by the power of my tenderness."

"Pardon—pardon, my father. These words escaped me. I afflict you."

"I am grieved, poor angel," mournfully replied Rodolph, "because these recollections of the past must be fearful to you—because they must poison your life, if you have the weakness to resign yourself to them."

"My father, it was accidental. Since our arrival here, this is the first time——"

"It is the first time that you have spoken to me on the subject—yes; but, perhaps, it is not the first time that your thoughts have tormented you. I have remarked these fits of melancholy, and sometimes have accused the past of creating your sorrow. But, while I was uncertain, I dared not endeavour to combat the fatal influence of these reminiscences, to show you their nothingness, their injustice; for if your melancholy had been owing to another cause—had the past been to you what it ought to be, a vain and evil dream, I ran the risk of awakening in your breast those painful thoughts which I wished to destroy."

"How very good you are! and how do these fears bear witness to your ineffable tenderness!"

"My position was so difficult—so delicate. I assure you that, although I said nothing, I was unceasingly reflecting upon what could have grieved you. In contracting a marriage which crowns all my wishes, I believed that I was giving you a further assurance of repose. I was too well aware of the excessive delicacy of your heart, to feel that you would for ever banish all thoughts of the past; but I said to myself, that if it chanced that your mind should linger on that period, you would, when you reflected that your were cherished with maternal fondness by the noble woman who knew you in the depth of your misfortunes, you would learn to look upon the past as sufficiently expiated by your dreadful sorrows, and be indulgent, or, rather, just towards yourself—for, indeed, my wife has, from her rare qualities, a right to the respect of all. Is it not so? Well, since you are to her as a daughter, as a cherished sister, ought you not to be quieted? Is not her attachment a perfect solace? Does it not say that she knows as well as I do, that you were a victim, and not guilty—that there is nothing to reproach but the misfortunes which have weighed you down from your birth? Had you even committed a thousand great faults, would they not have been expiated a thousand times, by all the good you have done, by whatever has been developed in your nature, that is excellent and adorable?"

"My father!"

"Oh, I pray you, let me speak all my thoughts, since chance, doubtless, a blessed chance, has brought about this conversation. For a long time have I desired and yet feared it. God grant that it may have a salutary influence! It is my duty to make you forget these fearful sorrows; so august, so sacred was the character

of my mission, that I should have had the courage to sacrifice to your repose my love for the Marquise d'Harville, my friendship for Murphy, had I thought that their presence would too mournfully have recalled the past."

"Oh, my dear father, can you believe it? Their presence, the presence of those who know —*what I was*—and who, notwithstanding, love me tenderly—does it not, on the contrary, personify forgetfulness and pardon? Truly, my father, my whole life would have been desolate, had you, on my account, renounced your marriage with the Marquise d'Harville!"

"Oh, I should not have been the only one to desire this sacrifice, had it been necessary to assure your happiness. You know not what penance Clémence would have voluntarily imposed upon herself—for she also understood the extent of my duty towards you."

"Your duty towards me! good heavens! what have I done to merit so much?"

"What have you done, poor beloved angel! Until the moment when you were restored to me, your life had been nothing but bitterness, misery, and desolation; and I reproach myself for your hard sufferings as if I had myself created them. Therefore, when I see you smiling, contented. I think that I am forgiven—my only aim, my only wish is to render you as pre-eminently happy as you have been wretched, to elevate you as much as you have been abased; for I fondly dream that the last vestiges of the past are effaced, when I see you receiving the homage, the respect of the most eminent and most honourable in rank and talent."

"Respect for me? no, no, my father—but for my rank, or rather for the rank which you have given me."

"Oh! it is not your rank that they love, that they revere—it is you, my beloved child—understand me well—it is yourself; you alone. There is a homage which rank demands, but there is one, also, imposed by beauty and accomplishments. You know not that, by a prodigy of understanding and of tact, which renders me as proud of you as I am fond, you deport yourself in all these novel and courtly ceremonies with a modesty and grace, to which the most haughty must pay homage."

"You love me so much, my father, and are yourself so much beloved, that they feel sure of pleasing you by showing me this deference."

"Oh! the naughty child!" exclaimed Rodolph, interrupting his daughter, and tenderly embracing her, "the naughty child, who will not grant me the satisfaction of a father's pride."

"Is not that pride as fully satisfied by attributing to yourself alone, dear father, that goodwill which they evince towards me?"

"Certainly not, mademoiselle," said the prince, smiling at his daughter to chase away the sorrow which still oppressed her; "no, mademoiselle, it is by no means the same thing; for I cannot be proud of myself, and I may, and ought to be proud of you—yes, proud! Again, I tell you, you know not how divinely you are endowed. In fifteen months your education has been so marvellously accomplished, that the most fastidious mother would be enthusiastic at your progress; and this education has increased the almost irresistible influence which you exercise over all those who approach you—and even without your being sensible of it."

"My father, your praises confuse me."

"I speak the truth, and the truth only. Shall I give you proofs of it? Let us revert boldly to the past, it is an enemy whom I wish to meet hand to hand; we must look him in the face. Well! do you remember Louve, that courageous woman who saved you? Recall to mind the scene in the prison, which you related to me: a crowd of prisoners, more ignorant even than wicked, were bent upon tormenting one of their companions, who was feeble and helpless; you appeared—you spoke to them, and instantly these furies, blushing at their cowardly cruelty towards their victim, became as charitable to her as they had been cruel. Was that nothing? And again, was or was it not your work, that this Louve, the most ungovernable of women, turned to repentance, and longed for an honest though laborious life? Believe me, my beloved child, she who could overawe Louve and her turbulent companions by the sole influence of goodness, fortified by a rare elevation of mind, although in other circumstances, and in an entirely opposite sphere, could, by the same charm (do not smile at my comparing them), fascinate the haughty Archduchess Sophia, and all my court; for good and wicked, great and small, always bend to the influence of superior souls. I do not mean to say that you are a *princess by nature*, according to the aristocratic acceptation of the term—that would be poor flattery to you, my child; but you are of that small number of privileged beings, who are born to speak, even before a queen, language that would charm and make her love you, and to whisper to a poor, debased, and abandoned creature redeeming and consoling words of comfort, that make her idolise you."

"My kind father, for pity's sake——"

"I cannot avoid it, mademoiselle—I must speak out, for too long has my heart been overcharged. Only imagine my dread of awakening your recollections of the past—recollections which I wished to destroy and annihilate for ever—I did not dare to speak to you of these comparisons, which render you so adorable in my eyes. How frequently have Clémence and myself been enraptured when speaking of your qualities—how often, while tears sprang to her eyes, has she said to me: 'Is it not marvellous that this dear child should be what she now is, after the miseries she has endured—or rather, continued Clémence, 'is it not marvellous that misfortune, so far from corrupting her rare and noble nature, has given greater scope to all that was excellent and good.'"

At this moment the door of the saloon was opened, and Clémence, Grand Duchess of Gerolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, my friend," said she to Rodolph, "is a letter from France. I chose to bring it to you myself, that I might say good morrow to my lazy child, whom I have not seen this morning," added Clémence, embracing Fleur-de-Marie very tenderly.

"This letter arrives most opportunely," said Rodolph, gaily, after hastily perusing it; "we were just speaking of the past—of that monster whom we must resolve incessantly to combat, my dear Clémence, for it menaces the tranquillity and happiness of our child."

"Can it be true, my friend? those melancholy musings which we have remarked ——"

"Had no other cause than unhappy remem-

brances; but, fortunately, we now know our enemy, and will triumph over him."

"But from whom comes this letter, my friend?" asked Clémence.

"From the pretty Rigolette—Germain's wife."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, "how delightful it is to hear from her."

"My friend," said Clémence, whispering to Rodolph, and, with a glance, directing his attention to Fleur-de-Marie, "are you not afraid that this letter may recall painful ideas to her mind?"

"It is these very painful ideas that I intend to destroy, my dear Clémence; we must boldly meet them—and I am sure of finding powerful weapons against them in this letter from Rigolette; for that excellent little creature adored our child, and duly appreciated her character."

And Rodolph read aloud the following letter:

Farm of Bouqueval, 15th August, 1841.

My Lord,—I take the liberty of writing to you again, to inform you of the great happiness which has befallen us, and to beg a new favour of you—of you, to whom we already owe so much; or rather, to whom we owe the real paradise in which I, Germain, and his good mother are now living.

What I have to tell you, my lord, is, that I have been almost beside myself with joy for the last ten days; for it is just ten days since I had a little girl, a perfect little love. As for myself, I think she is the complete image of Germain; he insists that she is like me. Our dear Madame Georges says that she is like us both. The fact is, she has charming blue eyes, like Germain's, and black, curly hair, like mine. But there is one thing in which my husband does not play fair: he always will have our little one on his own knee; whereas, I say that it is my right to have her. Is it not so, my lord?

"Excellent, worthy people! how happy they must be," said Rodolph. "If ever there was a well-matched couple, they are so."

"And how deserving Rigolette is of her happiness," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"I have always blessed the chance which led me to them," said Rodolph; and then continued reading the letter.

But, really, my lord, I beg your pardon for mentioning these little gentle family quarrels, which always end with a kiss. Moreover, your ears must often tingle, my lord, for not a day passes over our heads, without our saying to one another, we two Germains: "Are we not happy? oh, God! are we not happy?" and your name comes naturally to our lips immediately after these words. Pray forgive the scratching you find here, my lord, and the blot I have made; for I had, without thinking, written *M. Rodolph*, as I used to say formely, and I have scratched it out. I hope, with regard to that, you will find my writing much improved, as well as my spelling; for Germain continues teaching me, and I do not make the great pothooks and hangers, straggling all over the paper, as I did when you used to mend my pens.

"I must, confess," said Rodolph, laughing, "that my little *protégé* rather deceives herself; and I am certain that Germain amuses himself much oftener with kissing the hand of his pupil, than directing it."

"Come, come, my friend, you are unjust," said Clémence, looking at the letter; "the writing is rather large, but very legible."

"She certainly has made some progress," rejoined Rodolph. "Formerly, it would have taken eight pages to contain what she has now written in four:" and he went on reading.

It is, however, true, that you mended pens for me, my lord. When we think of it, we two Germains, we feel quite ashamed, that you should have had so little pride. But, good gracious! I find that I am still talking to you of everything but what we want to ask of you, my lord—for my husband unites with me in the petition—and it is a very important matter; we attach a religious feeling to it. You shall see.

We entreat you, my lord, to have the goodness to select for us, and give us a name for our darling little daughter; it is agreed upon with the godfather and godmother—and do you know who they are, my lord? Two persons whom you and the Marquise d'Harville rescued from misery to make them happy, happy as we ourselves are. In a word, it is Morel the lapidary, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of a poor prisoner nicknamed Pique Vinaigre, a worthy woman, whom I saw in prison when I used to visit my poor Germain, and whom the marquise afterwards released from the hospital.

Now, my lord, I must tell you why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We said to one another, we two Germains, it will be like thanking M. Rodolph again for his goodness to us, to choose as godfather and godmother for our little girl, worthy people who owe all they have to him and to the marquise, without at all considering that, besides this, Morel the lapidary and Jeanne Duport are the cream of honest people; they are of our own class, and moreover, as Germain and I say, they are *our relations in happiness*, because they belong to *the family of your protégés*, my lord.

"Oh! my father! do you not think this idea full of charming delicacy," said Fleur-de-Marie, with sweet emotion, "to select as godfather and godmother for their child, persons who owe all to you and to my second mother?"

"You are right, dear child," said Clémence. "I am much moved by this remembrance."

"And I am most happy in having so well bestowed my charity," said Rodolph, continuing the letter.

Moreover, by means of the money which you sent to him, M. Rodolph, Morel is now a diamond broker; he earns sufficient to bring up his family comfortably, and to put his children out to some business. Poor Louise is going, I believe, to be married to a worthy mechanic, who loves and respects her as she deserves, for she has been very unfortunate, but not criminal, and the intended husband of Louise has heart enough to understand that.

"I was quite sure," exclaimed Rodolph, addressing his daughter, "of finding in this letter of that dear little Rigolette, some weapons of defence against our enemy! You hear: this is an expression emanating from the plain good sense of an honest and right-thinking soul. She says of Louise: "*She has been unfortunate, but not criminal, and her intended husband has heart enough to understand that,*"

Fleur-de-Marie, more and more moved and afflicted by the reading of this letter, seemed to shudder under the look which her father momentarily cast upon her, as he pronounced the words we have emphasised.

The prince continued.

I will also inform you, my lord, that Jeanne Duport—thanks to the generosity of the marquise—has succeeded in getting a separation from her husband, that brute of a man who spent everything she had, and beat her also; she has taken back her eldest daughter to live with her, and keeps a little embroidery shop, where she sells what she and her children make. Their business prospers: and there are not many people who are happier—and for that, thanks to my lord, thanks to the marquise, who both know so well how to bestow, and how to bestow at the proper time.

But speaking of that, Germain will write you as usual, my lord, at the end of the month, on the subject of the *bank for labourers without work and gratuitous loans;* it is seldom that the repayments are not punctual, and people already acknowledge the comfort which it has spread in the district. Now, at all events, poor families can get through the dull season without sending their linen or their mattresses to the pawnbroker. And then, when work begins to be brisk again, you should see with what heart they set about it; they are so proud that confidence has been placed in their ability to work, and in their honesty—they have nothing else. And how they bless you for getting them loans upon it! Yes, my lord, they bless you—*you;* for whatever you may please to say, to deny that you had nothing to do with that establishment, save the appointing of Germain as directing cashier, and that it is an unknown person who has done this great good, we all choose to believe that it is yourself—it is more natural!

Moreover, there is a famous trumpeter, who proclaims at the corner of every alley and street, that it is you we ought to bless; this trumpeter is Madame Pipelet, who is constantly telling everybody, that it is only her king of tenants (pray forgive me, M. Rodolph, but she always calls you so) who can have done this charitable work, and her dear old Alfred is always of her opinion. As to him, he is so proud and happy with his office of porter of the bank, that he says the persecutions of M. Cabrion would now be perfectly indifferent to him. To come to an end of your family of grateful hearts, my lord, I will add, that Germain read in one of the newspapers, that a man named Martial, a colonist in Algeria, had been mentioned with great praise for the courage which he had shown in repelling, at the head of his farm labourers, an attack of Arabian freebooters, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been wounded by his side, when she was firing upon the marauders like a true grenadier. Since that time, says the newspaper, she has been christened Madame Carbine.

Excuse this long letter, my lord; but I thought that it would not be displeasing to you to hear news about all those to whom you have been a providence. I write to you from the farm of Bouqueval, where we have been living since the spring, with our dear mother. Germain starts early in the morning to his business, and returns in the evening. In the autumn, we shall go back to Paris, to live there. How droll it is, M. Rodolph, that I, who did not like the country, now adore it. Speaking of the farm, M. Rodolph, you, who no doubt, know what has become of that good little Goualeuse, if you have an opportunity, pray tell her that we all remember her, that we always think of her as the sweetest and best creature in the world, and that, as to myself, I never think of our own good fortune without saying to myself, as M. Rodolph was also the M. Rodolph of that dear Fleur-de-Marie, thanks to him, she must be happy as we are; and that makes me think my own happiness so much the greater.

Good gracious! how I am prattling away! What will you think of me, my lord? but, ah! you are so good, and besides, do you see? it is your own fault if I prattle as much as Father Cretu and Ramonette, who no longer dare venture to strive against me in singing. Ah! M. Rodolph, I cut out work enough for them, I promise you.

You will not refuse our request, will you, my lord? If you give a name to our dear little child, it appears to us it would insure her happiness, that it would be her fortunate star. Sometimes, M. Rodolph, I and my good Germain almost congratulate ourselves upon having known trouble, because we feel doubly how blest our child will be in not being exposed to the misery through which we have passed.

If I conclude by telling you, M. Rodolph, that we endeavour to relieve the poor people of our neighbourhood, according to our means, it is not that we mean to boast of it, but that you may know that we do not keep to ourselves all the happiness which you have given us; moreover, we always say to those we assist: It is not we whom you must thank and bless—it is M. Rodolph, the best, the most generous man upon earth; and they consider you a saint, if not something more.

Adieu, my lord; be assured that when our little daughter first begins to spell, the first word she shall read will be your name, M. Rodolph; and the next shall be those words which you had inscribed upon my wedding present: "*Labour and prudence—honour and happiness.*"

Thanks to these four words. To our tenderness and our care we hope, my lord, our child will be always worthy to pronounce the name of him who has been to us a Providence, as to all the unfortunates whom he has known.

Pardon me, my lord, but in concluding this, my eyes are full of tears; but they are good tears. Excuse this scrawl, if you please—it is not my fault, but I can no longer see clearly, and my pen goes badly.

I have the honour, my lord, to salute you with as much respect as gratitude.

RIGOLETTE GERMAIN.

P.S. Oh, heaven! what have I done, my lord! I see, on reading over my letter, that I have several times written *M. Rodolph.* You will forgive me, will you not? Be assured that by whatever name you are called, we equally respect and bless you, my lord.

"Dear little Rigolette," said Clémence, much affected by the letter Rodolph had just read, "her style is plain, but it abounds in feeling."

"I could not have found a person more worthy of my interest," observed Rodolph; "our *protégé* is gifted with a most excellent nature, a heart of gold; and our dear child appreciates her as we do," he added, turning to his daughter; but struck with her pallid and agitated looks, he exclaimed: "Are you ill, my child?"

"Alas! the contrast between my position and that of Rigolette, is most painful to me. *Labour and prudence—honour and happiness!* these four little words express all that she has been—all that she will be during life. When a young girl, she was industrious and prudent, and now she is beloved as a wife, happy as a mother, and

honoured as a woman. Such is her destiny; while I!——"

"Gracious heaven! what are you saying?"

"Pardon, dear father; accuse me not of ingratitude, but in spite of your unalterable tenderness and the affection of my second mother, in spite of all the splendours and honours by which I am surrounded, and your own sovereign power, my shame is irremediable—nothing can obliterate the past. Again I entreat your pardon. Oh! my father! till this moment, I have concealed the dreadful truth; but the remembrance of my former degradation almost maddens me—it is killing me."

"Do you hear her, Clémence!" exclaimed Rodolph, almost frantically.

"Unhappy child!" said Clémence, affectionately, taking Fleur-de-Marie's hand, "does not our tenderness, the affection of all who surround you, which you well deserve—does not all this convince you that you ought to look upon the past as a mere idle and frightful dream?"

"Oh! fate! fate!" rejoined Rodolph, "I now curse my coward fears, my silence! this fatal thought, so long rooted in her mind, has made most frightful ravages without our even suspecting its existence, and it is now too late to overcome the fatal error. How unhappy am I!"

"Courage, my dearest," said Clémence to Rodolph; "you said but now, it is better to know the enemy who threatens us. The cause of our dear child's unhappiness is now revealed to us, and we shall overcome it; for we have reason, justice, and affection, on our side."

"And she must know, should her affliction prove incurable, that ours would become so too," rejoined Rodolph; "for it would make one doubt all justice, human and divine, should this unhappy girl have merely changed one species of affliction for another."

After a silence of some minutes, during which Fleur-de-Marie seemed deeply meditating, she took one hand of Rodolph, and one hand of Clémence, and said to them in a voice profoundly agitated: "Hear me, my dear father, and you my tender mother: this is a solemn day. It is the will of God, and I humbly thank him that I am no longer able to conceal my sufferings from you. But I could not have withheld the confession I am about to make, for all sufferings must have their end; and, however hidden mine have been, I could not much longer have withheld my secret from you."

"Ah! I understand it all," exclaimed Rodolph; "all hope is now destroyed."

"My hope is in the future, my father; and that hope gives me the strength to speak to you as I do."

"And what hope can you have in the future, unhappy child, when your present brilliant position brings you only sorrow and bitterness?"

"I will tell you, my father; but before doing so, permit to recal the past, to confess to you and before God, who hears me, all that I have felt."

"Speak, speak, we are listening to you," said Rodolph, sitting down with Clémence, near Fleur-de-Marie.

"So long as I remained at Paris, in your house, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, "I was so happy, oh! so superlatively happy, that those days would not be too dearly recompensed by years of suffering; you therefore see, that at least I *have* known happiness."

"But during only a few days——"

"Yes; but what pure and unmixed delight! You encompassed me, as you have ever done, with the most tender cares! I abandoned myself, without apprehension, to the transports of gratitude and affection, with which my heart beat towards you. The future dazzled me: I had a father to adore—a second mother, worthy of all my regard; for she was to replace mine, whom I had never known: and besides (for I must confess everything), my pride, even in spite of myself, exulted in the honour of belonging to you. Whenever any of the few persons who formed your household at Paris, had occasion to address me, they called me *your highness:* I could not avoid being proud of this title. When I sometimes vaguely recurred to the past, it was to say to myself: 'I, who was formerly so debased, and so degraded, am now the daughter of a sovereign prince, whom all men revere and bless. I, once so unfortunate, enjoy all the luxuries and splendours of an almost royal existence!' Alas! how could it be otherwise? My good fortune was so unforeseen—it came upon me so suddenly; your great rank environed me with such dazzling splendour, that my being blinded by it was, perhaps, excusable."

"Excusable! What could be more natural, my poor beloved angel? How could it be culpable, to feel proud of a rank which was your right? to enjoy the advantages of a position to which I had restored you? I well remember that, in those happy days, your gaiety was enchanting. How often did you then throw yourself into my arms, apparantly overcome with happiness, exclaiming, in those merry, bewitching accents: 'I am destined no more to harm! My father, this is too much—too much happiness!' It is these remembrances which have unfortunately lulled me into a deceitful security; and I did not sufficiently inquire into the causes of your melancholy."

"But tell me, my child," said Clémence, "what fatal cause has changed a joy so pure, so legitimate as you then experienced, to such bitter sorrow?"

"Alas! a most fatal and unforeseen circumstance!"

"What circumstance?"

"Do you remember, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, shuddering with horror, "do you remember the terrible scene which preceded our departure from Paris, when your carriage was stopped near the barrier?"

"Yes," replied Rodolph, sorrowfully. "Brave Chourineur! after having saved my life a second time, he died—there—before our eyes, saying: 'Heaven is just—I *have* murdered—I *am* murdered.'"

"Well! at the moment that unhappy man expired, do you know who I saw looking steadfastly at me? Oh! that look—that look—it has haunted me ever since," said Fleur-de-Marie, shuddering.

"What look? of whom do you speak?" cried Rodolph.

"Of the *ogress of the tapis-franc,*" murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"That monster! where was it that you saw her?"

"You did not recognise her, then—in the tavern where Chourineur died; she was among the women who surrounded him."

"Ah! now," said Rodolph, with great emotion, "I understand. Already struck with hor-

ror at the murder of Chourineur, you conceived there was something providential in this dreadful meeting."

"It is but too true, my father; on seeing the ogress, a mortal coldness pervaded every sense; under her withering look, my heart, which until then was teeming with happiness and hope, froze in an instant. Yes, the meeting with that woman, at the moment Chourineur expired, exclaiming: '*Heaven is just!*' appeared to me as a reproach from heaven for my presumptuous oblivion of the past; and this presumption I ought to expiate by humiliation and repentance."

"You could not be accountable to heaven for what had passed; all you had done was by compulsion—you were helpless, overpowered, unhappy child. Once precipitated into that abyss, escape from it was impossible, notwithstanding your compunction, your alarm, your despair; thanks to the atrocious indifference of that society of which you were the victim. You felt yourself for ever enchained in that den; nothing but chance, which threw you in my way, could have released you from it."

"And then, my child," rejoined Clémence, "as your father tells you, you were the victim, and not the accomplice in this infamy."

"But that infamy—I have undergone it, my mother," replied Fleur-de-Marie, with a mournful shudder, "nothing can destroy these frightful recollections—they unceasingly pursue me, not as heretofore among the peaceful inhabitants of a farm, or the degraded women who were my companions in Saint-Lazare—but they pursue me in this palace, inhabited by the first of the land; they pursue me even when in the arms of my father—even upon the steps of his throne."

And Fleur-de-Marie burst into tears.

Rodolph and Clémence remained mute before this fearful expression of unquenchable remorse; they also wept, for they felt the impotency of their consolations.

"From that time," said Fleur-de-Marie, wiping away her tears, "I am constantly saying to myself: 'I am honoured, I am revered—the most eminent, the most honourable persons of the state shower their attentions upon me; before the whole court the sister of an emperor deigned to fasten a bandeau on my forehead—and I that have lived among the scum of the city, the companions of robbers and assassins!' Oh! my father, forgive me; but the more elevated my station the more severely do I feel the profound degradation into which I had fallen; when any new homage is paid to me, I feel myself guilty of profanation. Think then of this; after being *what I have been*, that young and noble ladies, that mothers of families, respected for their virtues, should consider themselves flattered in being permitted to approach me; that princesses, rendered doubly venerable by age and their sacerdotal character, should heap kindness and praises upon me! is it not impious and sacrilegious? And then, again, did you but know, my father, what I have suffered, what I still suffer daily, when I ask myself: 'Should it please God to make known the past, with what deserved disdain would they not look on her, whom now they elevate so high!' How just though terrible a retribution!"

"But, unhappy child, my wife and I know all that has befallen you; we are worthy of the rank we bear, and yet we love you dearly—we adore you."

"Your doating fondness for me prevents your seeing——"

"And all the good you have done since your arrival here? that holy and beautiful institution founded by you as an asylum for orphan girls, and for young girls abandoned by their parents; the admirable wisdom you have evinced in the regulations laid down for their protection and improvement; your insisting upon calling them *your sisters*, and that they should address you by the same endearing application; and you, in fact, have treated them as sisters. Is this nothing for the redemption of errors which never were your own? And the affection evinced towards you by the worthy Abbess de Sainte-Hermangilde, who did not know you till your arrival here—do you not owe it solely to your elevation of mind, to your sincere piety?"

"So long as the Abbess of Sainte-Hermangilde bestows her praises upon my present conduct, I rejoice in them without scruple; but when she cites me as an example for the young and noble ladies who study religion in the abbey—when they look to me as to a model of all the virtues, I am overwhelmed with confusion, and consider myself an accomplice in an unworthy falsehood."

After a long silence, Rodolph, with sorrowful despondency, continued: "I see we must despair of bringing conviction to your mind; all reasoning is powerless against a conviction, the more unmovable because founded on a just and elevated sentiment. By reverting incessantly to the past, the contrast between your recollections and your present position, cannot but prove a constant state of torment. Pardon, my child; it is for me now to ask your forgiveness."

"You, my dear father! Forgiveness from me! and gracious heaven! for what?"

"Not to have foreseen your susceptibility. From the excessive delicacy of your mind, I ought to have foreseen it. I thought it my duty to formally acknowledge you as my daughter: this reverence, this homage, which is so painful to you, has necessarily been paid to you. But I was in error: I was too proud of you: I wished to witness the influence which your beauty, your understanding, your character, exercised upon all who approached you. I ought to have hid my treasure—to have lived almost in retirement with Clémence and yourself—to have renounced those fêtes, those great assemblies in which I loved to see you shine—thinking madly to raise you to such a height, that the past would disappear entirely. But, alas! it has produced the contrary effect; and, as you have told me, the higher your elevation, the more gloomy and profound appears the abyss from which I have withdrawn you. Again I repeat, mine has been the error. And yet, I thought that I was acting wisely," said Rodolph, wiping away his tears, "but I deceived myself. Too early I imagined my own faults were pardoned: the vengeance of God is not yet satisfied: it still pursues me by destroying the happiness of my child!"

At this moment, a few slight taps given at the door of the room which communicated with the oratory, interrupted this sorrowful conversation.

Rodolph rose, and, half-opening the door, he saw Murphy, who said: "I beg your royal highness' pardon for interrupting you; but a courier has just arrived from the Prince of Herkausen Oldenzaal, bringing this letter, which he says is of great importance, and should be delivered instantly to your royal highness."

"Thanks, my good Murphy; remain somewhere at hand," said Rodolph, sighing, "I shall want to speak with you, presently."

The prince, having shut the door, remained for some minutes in the ante-room, reading the letter which Murphy had brought him. It was couched in the following terms:

"My Lord,—May I hope that the ties of kindred which attach me to your royal highness, and the friendship with which you have always deigned to honour me, will excuse a step, which, did not my duty as an honest man impel me to it, might be considered as a great temerity.

It is now fifteen months ago, that you, my lord, returned from France, bringing with you a daughter, more beloved because you had thought her lost to you for ever, while on the contrary, she had never left her mother, whom you had married at Paris, *in extremis*, in order to legitimate the birth of the Princess Amelia, who then became the equal of the other princesses of the Germanic confederation.

Her birth is, therefore, royal, her beauty incomparable; her heart is as worthy of her birth as her understanding is of her beauty. My sister, the Abbess of Hermangilde, who had frequently the honour of seeing the well-beloved daughter of your royal highness, has, by letter, informed me of these facts.

I shall now, my lord, frankly state the object of this letter; for a serious illness detains me at Oldenzaal, and prevents me from waiting in person upon your royal highness.

During the time which my son passed at Gerolstein, he saw the Princess Amelia almost daily: he passionately loves her; but from her he has always concealed his love.

I have thought it my duty to inform you of it, my lord. You deigned to receive my son with paternal affection, and to invite him to return, to reside in the bosom of your family, with that intimacy which is so precious to him. I should have basely forfeited my good faith, had I withheld from your royal highness the knowledge of a circumstance which might modify the welcome which you intended for my son.

I know that it would be folly in us to hope to be allied more nearly than we are, to the family of your royal highness.

I know that your daughter, of whom your royal highness is so justly proud, may lay claim to a high destiny.

But I know also that you are the most affectionate of fathers, and that, should you think my son worthy to belong to your family, and that he would render the Princess Amelia happy, your consent would not be withheld on account of the serious disproportions, which make such happiness almost unhoped for on our part.

It would ill befit me to enter into my praise of Henry; but, my lord, I appeal to the encouragement and approbation which you so often deigned to bestow upon him.

I dare not, and I cannot say more, my lord, my emotions are too profound.

Whatever may be your determination, deign to believe that we shall submit to it with respect, and that I shall always remain faithful to the sentiments of profound devotion, with which I have the the honour to be,

Your royal highness's

Very humble and obedient servant,

Gustave Paul.

After reading the letter of the Prince Henry's father, Rodolph remained, some time, sorrowful and pensive, and then a ray of hope brightening his brow, he returned to his daughter, on whom Clémence had in vain been lavishing her consolations.

"My child, you have yourself told us, that God has ordered that this should be a day of solemn explanation," said Rodolph to Fleur-de-Marie. "I did not foresee that an entirely new and important circumstance would have justified your words."

"To what does that relate, my father?"

"What is it, my friend?" asked Clémence.

"New subjects of apprehension."

"For whom, then, my father?"

"For you."

"For me?"

"You have only acknowledged to us half your sorrows, my poor child."

"Be good enough to explain yourself, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"I can do so, now: I could not do so earlier, for I was then ignorant that you despaired so utterly of your father. Listen, my beloved child; you believe yourself to be—or rather, you are most unhappy. When, at the commencement of our conversation, you spoke of still remaining hopes, I understood; my heart was broken, for I was threatened with losing you for ever, with seeing you entering a cloister, descending into a living tomb. You wish to retire to a convent?"

"My father!"

"Is it not true, my child?"

"Yes, if you will permit it," replied Fleur-de-Marie, in a voice nearly suffocated with emotion.

"You would leave us?" said Clémence.

"The Abbey of Sainte-Hermangilde is not far distant from Gerolstein: I should see you often, you and my father."

"Consider, my child, such vows are eternal; you are but eighteen years old, and perhaps, hereafter ——"

"Oh! I should never repent my resolution; in the solitude of the cloister only, shall I find repose and forgetfulness, provided you, my father, and you, my second mother, continue your affection for me."

"The duties, the consolations of a religious life, might, indeed," said Rodolph, "cure, or alleviate at least, thy poor distressed and wounded soul. And although half the happiness of my life would be destroyed by it, I might be led to approve your resolutions. I know how poignantly you suffer, and I do not say that a renouncement of the world might not be the term of your sorrowful existence."

"How! you too, Rodolph?" exclaimed Clémence.

"Permit me, my friend, to explain my meaning," replied Rodolph; and then, addressing his daughter: "But before taking this extreme determination, we must examine if another destiny would not accord much better with your wishes and with ours. In such a case, there is no sacrifice I would not make to assure you such a destiny."

Fleur-de-Marie and Clémence both made a gesture of surprise; Rodolph, looking earnestly at his daughter, continued: "What think you of your cousin, the Prince Henry?"

Fleur-de-Marie started, and blushed deeply; and then, after a moment's hesitation, threw herself, weeping, into the arms of her father.

"You love him, my poor child."

"You never before asked me if I did, my father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, wiping away her tears.

"Then you love him," added Rodolph, taking his daughter's hands in his own; "you love him, my darling child."

"Oh, if you knew," replied Fleur-de-Marie, "what it has cost me to hide this sentiment from you, since I became aware of its existence in my heart! Alas! at the least interrogation from yourself, I should have avowed it to you, but shame restrained me, and would always have kept me silent."

"And do you think that Henry is conscious of your love for him?"

"Good heavens! my father, I do not think it," said Fleur-de-Marie, in affright.

"And Henry, do you believe that he loves you?"

"No, my father, no. Oh, I hope not; he will suffer too much."

"And how did your love begin, my angel?"

"Alas! almost unconsciously. You remember the portrait of the page?"

"That in the apartment of the Abbess of Sainte-Hermangilde? that is Henry's portrait."

"Yes, my father: believing it to be an old painting, I one day, in your presence, confessed to the superior that I was struck with the beauty of the portrait. You then jestingly told me, that 'this was the portrait of one of our ancestors, who, while very young, had manifested great courage, and many excellent qualities.' The agreeableness of the face, in connection with what you told me of the noble character of this ancestor, augmented my first impression. From that day, I have often delighted to dwell upon that portrait, and I have done so without scruple, believing that my tenderness was wasted upon a cousin long since dead. Little by little, I accustomed myself, I became habituated to these sweet thoughts; knowing that I was not permitted to love on this earth," added Fleur-de-Marie, with a heart-broken expression, and weeping still more bitterly, "I took a kind of melancholy interest in these strange reveries, half-joyous, half-sorrowful as they were; I looked upon this pretty page of the olden time, as my betrothed one beyond the tomb, whom I should one day find in the realms of eternity. I thought that such was the only love worthy of a heart which belonged wholly to yourself, my father. I pray you, pardon this sad childishness."

"Nothing could touch me more, poor child," said Clémence, deeply moved.

"Now," said Rodolph, "I understand why you once, with a sorrowful air, reproached me for having deceived you with regard to that portrait."

"Yes, my father; judge of my confusion, when some time afterwards, the abbess informed me the portrait was that of her nephew, one of our kindred. Then my trouble was extreme. I tried to forget my first impressions; but the more I tried, the deeper they took root in my heart, and grew more firmly from the very constancy of my efforts to remove them; and still more unhappily for me, I often heard you praise the heart, the mind, the character of Prince Henry."

"You loved him, then, when you had only seen his portrait, and heard the praise of his rare qualities?"

"Without loving him, my father, I felt an attachment for him, for which I bitterly reproached myself; but I consoled myself with the reflection, that nobody in the world knew the sad secret, which so covered me with shame in my own eyes. For me to dare to love! me! me! Not to content myself with your tenderness, and that of my second mother! Ought I not to expend all the fervour, all the resources of my heart in loving you alone? Oh, believe me, of all my self-reproaches, this is the most bitter! At length I saw my cousin for the first time, at the grand fête you gave to the Archduchess Sophia; Prince Henry bore so striking a resemblance to his portrait, that I knew him immediately. On that very evening, you presented my cousin to me, and authorised that intimacy between us, which consanguinity allows."

"And you soon loved each other."

"Ah! my father, he expressed his respect, his attachment, his admiration, with so much eloquence—and you had yourself said so much in his praise!"

"He deserved it. I know of no character more lofty, no better or manlier heart."

"I entreat you, father, do not praise him thus. I am already wretched enough."

"I am determined to convince you of all the rare qualities of your cousin. What I say, surprises you. I understand it, my daughter: go on."

"I knew the danger I incurred by so constant an intercourse with the prince; but I could not flee from it. Notwithstanding my absolute confidence in you, dear father, I dared not confess my fears. I summoned all my courage to conceal my fondness; for I acknowledge, dear father, that, in spite of my remorse, I was forgetful of the past, in our daily and familiar intercourse, and tasted of happiness that I had never known before. Alas! it was but the forerunner of a keener anguish, and I sank once more under the weight of my sad remembrances. Ah! if they were my constant attendants amid the homage and attentions of people almost indifferent to me—judge, judge, dear father, what must have been my tortures while the prince lavished upon me his prodigal, and yet most delicate praises—circling me about with a high and holy adoration, and devoting his fraternal love to the sainted protection of that mother, whom he had so early lost. I strove to merit the sweet name of sister, at least, by counselling my cousin as to his future career, according to my small ability, by interesting myself in all that concerned him, and by promising myself that I would for ever solicit for him your guardian care. But how severe were my torments, how abundant my tears, when Prince Henry chanced to question me about my infancy, my early youth! What! to deceive! always to deceive! always to fear! always to falsify! always to tremble under the glance of one whom we love and respect—as trembles the criminal before the inexorable eye of his judge! Dear father, I was guilty, I know it. I had no right to love him—but then I expiated this sad love by so much sorrow! What am I saying? The departure of Prince Henry, by causing a new and violent grief, enlightened my mind; I saw that I loved him more than I had thought. And very soon," added Fleur-de-Marie, as if this confession had exhausted all her strength, "very soon would I have revealed it to you; for

this fatal love had filled the measure of my afflictions. Tell me, dear father, now that you know all, can there be any other future for me than the cloister?"

"There is another, my child; and that future is as sweet, as smiling, and as happy as the convent is gloomy and dismal."

"Father! what do you say?"

"Now, listen to me. You well know that I love you too dearly, that my tenderness is too clear-sighted not to have discerned the mutual affection of Henry and yourself. In a few days, I was sure that he loved you, even more than he was beloved."

"Father! no, no! it is impossible; he could never love me thus."

"He loves you! passionately, madly loves you!"

"Oh, my God! my God!"

"Listen further. When I indulged in that pleasantry about the portrait, I was not aware that Henry was so soon to visit his aunt at Gerolstein. When he came, I gave way to the partiality which he always inspired, and invited him to visit us often. Till then, I had always treated him as a son, and I did not in the least change my conduct towards him. After a few days, Clémence and I could not doubt the mutual affection which you felt for one another. If your position was an unhappy one, my child, mine was most painful, and, moreover, one of extreme delicacy. As a father, knowing the rare and excellent qualities of Henry, I could not be otherwise than profoundly happy at your attachment; for never could I have imagined a husband more worthy of you. But, as a man of honour, I reflected on the mournful past of my child; and, far from encouraging the hopes of Henry, I gave him, in many of our conversations, advice directly contrary to what I should have given, had I thought of granting him your hand. In circumstances so delicate, it became me, both as a father and a man of honour, to observe a strict neutrality; not to encourage in the least your cousin's love, but to treat him with the same affability as of old. You have, my darling, been so unhappy, that when I beheld you under the influence of this pure and noble affection, I could not bear to rend from you these strange, divine delights. Admitting, even, that your dream must sooner or later be broken, you would taste some moments of innocent joy. And now, after all, this love will assure your future repose."

"My repose!"

"Still further. Henry's father, the Prince Paul, has written to me. Here is his letter. Though he regards the alliance as an unhoped favour, he asks your hand for his son, who, he tells me, entertains for you the most respectful, the most passionate love."

"Oh, heaven!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, hiding her face in her hands. "I might have been so happy!"

"Courage, my well-beloved," tenderly exclaimed Rodolph. "If you desire it, this happiness shall be yours."

"Oh, never! never! do you forget?"

"I forget nothing. But I remember that, instead of your entering a convent to-morrow, where I should not only lose you for ever, but where you would be consigned to grief and austerity, I shall part with you only to make you blest, as the wife of one whom you love, and who will cherish you as he ought!"

"His wife! *I* his wife!"

"But on the sole condition, that, after your marriage, contracted here, at night, with no other witnesses than Murphy for yourself, and the Baron de Graün for Henry, you will set out for some tranquil retreat in Switzerland, or Italy, where you can live unknown, as private wealthy citizens. Now, my daughter, do you know how I have been able to resign myself to your departure? Do you know why I desire Henry to give up his title as soon as he shall leave Germany? It is because I am confident that in the midst of solitary happiness, passing your days far from all pomp and ceremony, you will, by degrees, learn to forget the hateful past, now so painful from the bitter contrast which it affords to the grandeur that surrounds you."

"Rodolph is right," exclaimed Clémence. "Continually happy in his good fortune, as well as your own, you will no longer have any time to brood over former sorrows, my gentle one."

"And then, as it will be quite impossible for me to exist without seeing you, Clémence and myself will, every year, come and visit you."

"And by-and-by, when the wound which now pains you shall be healed—when you have found oblivion in happiness—and that time will come sooner than you imagine—you can return, never to leave us more."

"Oblivion in happiness!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie, who had resigned herself to the power of the enchanting dream.

"Yes, yes, my child," said Clémence; "when every moment of your life you find yourself respected, blessed, and adored by the husband of your choice, by the man whose generous and noble spirit your father has a thousand times commended, can you have leisure to revert to the past? And then, also, you will wonder how it was that the past could ever have afflicted you; how you could ever have hesitated to believe in the unclouded felicity of your husband?"

"It is indeed true—and tell me, my child," said Rodolph, who could hardly restrain his tears of joy at seeing his daughter thus moved, "when you are conscious of the idolatry of your husband, and are convinced that to you he owes his happiness, how can you reproach yourself?"

"Father," said Fleur-de-Marie, oblivious of the past, in her delicious hopes, "can it be possible that so much happiness is in reserve for me?"

"Ah! I am sure of it," cried Rodolph, with a burst of triumphant joy. "What is there that a father will not do for the welfare of a daughter whom he adores?"

"Marry Henry, and pass my whole life with him, and my father, and my second mother!" repeated Fleur-de-Marie, yielding more and more to the sweet intoxication of her dream.

"Yes, my darling angel, we shall all be happy. I will instantly reply to Henry's father, and say that I consent to the marriage," said Rodolph, clasping Fleur-de-Marie in his arms with unspeakable emotion. "Be calm, my dear, our separation will be transitory: the new duties, that marriage will enjoin, will more closely keep you in that path of oblivion and happiness in which you will henceforth walk for ever; and, at last, when you shall become a mother, nothing will be wanting to complete your joy."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, with a startling scream; for that word *mother* had awoke her from her lulling and enchanting dream. "Mother! me! oh, never! I am unworthy of the sacred name! I should die with shame, before my child, if I had not already died in the presence of its father, when I made to him a confession of the past——"

"Good heaven! what do you say?" cried Rodolph, frightened by this sudden change.

"I, a mother!" said Fleur-de-Marie, in the bitterness of her despair; "I respected! I blessed with an innocent and unstained child! I! once the object of universal contempt! I to profane the sacred name of mother! oh, never! Miserable fool that I was, to yield myself to so unworthy a hope!"

"My daughter, have pity on me! Hear me!"

Fleur-de-Marie drew herself up to her full height, pale and beautiful, in the majesty of her incurable sorrow: "My father, we forget that before we marry, Prince Henry must know the history of my past life."

"I have not forgotten it," said Rodolph; "he ought to know it; he shall know it."

"And would you not rather that I should die than so degrade myself in his eyes?"

"But he will know that an irresistible fatality cast you into the abyss: he will know your reinstatement——"

"And he will feel also," said Clémence, "that since I call you my daughter, he ought not to be ashamed to call you his wife."

"Mother! I love, I esteem Prince Henry too much ever to give him my hand, that hand which has been defiled by the bandits of the City."

* * *

Shortly after this mournful scene, the following appeared in the official gazette of Gerolstein:—

"Yesterday, took place, in the Grand Ducal Abbey of Sainte-Hermangilde, in presence of his Royal Highness the reigning Grand Duke, and all his court, the ceremony of taking the veil, by the very high and puissant princess, her Highness Amelia of Gerolstein.

"Her profession as novice, was received by the Very Illustrious and Very Reverend Monseigneur Charles Maxamilian, Archbishop, Duke of Oppenheim: and Monseigneur Annibal Andrê Montano, Bishop of Ceuta, *in partibus infidelium* and Apostolic Nuncio, gave her the kiss of peace and the papal benediction.

"The sermon was delivered by the Most Reverend Pierre d'Asfeld, Canon of the Chapter of Cologne, and Count of the Sacred Roman Empire."

CHAPTER III.

THE PROFESSION.

RODOLPH TO CLEMENCE.

Gerolstein, January 12.*

From the news you have sent me to-day, of the recovery of your father, my dearest friend, you lead me to hope, that before the end of the week you may be enabled to bring him hither. I had warned him, while residing at Rosenfold, situated as it is in the midst of vast forests, he would be exposed, in spite of every possible precaution, to the keen severity of your frosts. Unfortunately, his passion for hunting caused him to neglect my advice. I request you, Clémence, as soon as your father shall be able to endure the motion of his carriage, to set forth at once; leave that wild country, that wild dwelling-place, which is indeed habitable only by those antique, iron-limbed Germans, the very race of whom has vanished from the earth.

I am in constant terror lest you, too, should be taken ill. The fatigues of that hurried journey, the anxiety to which you must have been a prey, until you found yourself in the presence of your father, must all have had a cruel effect on your spirits. Alas! why was not I able to accompany you?

Clémence, I implore you, be guilty of no imprudence. I know how courageous you are, and how self-devoted. I know with what incessant care you will nurse the convalescence of your father. But he will be as much affected, even as I, should your health suffer during his journey. I regret doubly the count's illness; for it has hindered you from being with me, at a time when I should have derived deep consolation from your tenderness.

The ceremony of the *profession* of your poor child still remains fixed for to-morrow—for to-morrow, the 13th of January, that most fatal day. It was on the 13th of January that I drew my sword upon my father. Ah, my beloved, I imagined too soon that I had earned forgiveness of my crime. Alas! the intoxicating hope of passing my life with you and my child, led me to overlook the fact, that it was *she*, not I, who had been punished theretofore; and that my chastisement was yet to come.

It did come, when some six months ago, the wretched girl revealed to us the double torture of the heart which she was undergoing!—*her hopeless shame, inspired by her past life, joined to her hapless love for Henry.*

These two bitter and burning passions, exaggerated each by the opposition of the other, necessarily, and, as it were, by a kind of fatal argument brought her to a determined resolution of taking the veil. You well know, my beloved, that even while we strove, with all the strength with which our mighty love for her inspired us, to persuade her from that sad design, we yet could not deny that her courageous conduct would have been ours also, in the like circumstances.

What answer could we make to those dreadful words: "*I love Henry too dearly to give to him a hand polluted by the touch of assassins.*"

It was her duty to sacrifice herself to her noble scruples, to the indelible consciousness of her disgrace. She has done gallantly—she has renounced the splendours of the world—she has descended the steps of a throne, to kneel clothed in serge on the pavement of a church. She has folded her hands on her bosom, bowed her angelic head—her beautiful ringlets, which I loved so dearly, and which I yet preserve as a treasure, have fallen beneath the fatal scissors.

Oh, my beloved, you know the terrible emotion which we felt at that melancholy, solemn moment—that emotion is as keenly felt now, in my bosom, as at the very moment that excited it. Even as I write these words, I weep like a child.

I have seen her this morning, and although she appears less pale than usual, and insists that she has no suffering, her state of health alarms me terribly! Alas! when, under the veil and

* About six months had been passed since the entrance of Fleur-de-Marie into the Convent of Sainte-Hermangilde, as a novice

fillets which bind her noble brow, I saw that her emaciated features were as white and almost as cold as marble, making her large, blue eyes appear larger, I cannot help dreaming of the pure and heavenly brilliance which lighted up her beauty at the hour of our marriage—never had we beheld—was it not so, Clémence?—a vision more enchanting. Our happiness appeared to be reflected by her radiant features.

As I just told you, I have seen her this morning. She has not yet been informed, that the Princess Julianne deposes herself voluntarily from her abbatial dignity in her favour. To-morrow, then, upon the very day of her profession, our child will be elected abbess. Never, it is said, has there been so perfect a unanimity among the noble damsels of the society, as there now is to confer on her this honour.*

From the commencement of her noviciate, there has been but one voice has to her piety, her chastity, her scrupulous exactness in the performance of all the rules of the Order, of which, unfortunately, she even exaggerates the severity.

She has exercised from the first in her convent, that influence which she exerts everywhere, without pretending to do so, and even without seeming to suspect her power, which by that very cause is doubled.

Her conversation of this morning has convinced me of what I feared before—that she has not found in the solitude of the cloister, in the severe practice of monastic life, that repose, that forgetfulness, of which she was in search. Nevertheless, she rejoices in her resolution, which she considers the accomplishment merely of an imperious duty. But she still suffers; for she was not born for the contemplation of those mystical ideas, in the midst of which some persons, forgetting all affections, all memories pertaining to this world, lose themselves in a sort of ascetic ravishment.

Yes! Fleur-de-Marie believes; she prays; she submits herself to the rigorous and harsh observances of her Order; she lavishes evangelical consolations—lavishes the most humble attentions upon the poor sick women who are patients in the hospital of the abbey. She has even refused the assistance of a lay sister for the arrangement of that sad cell, so bare and cold, and in which we were so deeply grieved and astonished to behold the dry, dead branches of her favourite rose-tree hung up.

In one word, she is the beloved example, the venerated model of the whole society. But—she owned it to me this morning, reproaching herself bitterly for her weakness—she is not so much absorbed in the practice and the austerities of a religious life, but that the past is constantly before her mind, not only as it is, but as it might have been. "I blame myself for this, my father," she said, with that sweet, calm resignation, which you must have observed in her: "I blame myself for this; but I cannot avoid thinking sometimes, if it had only pleased God to spare me the degradation which has blighted my future, how happily I could have lived with you, beloved by the husband of your choosing. In my own despite, my life is divided between these mournful regrets, and the fearful recollections of the City. In vain I implore God to deliver me from these visions which visit me; to fill my heart only with His pious love—His holy aspirations; to take me, in fact, to Himself all in all, since all in all I wish to give myself up to Him: He does not grant my wishes, doubtless, because my earthly preoccupations render me unworthy to enter into communion with Him."

"We are yet in time, then!" exclaimed I; "your noviciate terminates to-day, and it is only to-morrow that your solemn profession of celibacy is to take place. You are still free; renounce this rude and austere life, which does not bring you the consolation you expected from it. If you must suffer, come to our arms to suffer, and our affection will mitigate your affliction."

Sorrowfully shaking her head, she replied to me with that inflexible force of reasoning, which has so often struck me with surprise: "There is no doubt, my dear father, the solitude of the cloister must be gloomy to me; to me so long accustomed to your never-ceasing tenderness. Doubtless, I am still pursued by bitter regrets, by heart-rending recollections; but I feel I am at least fulfilling a great duty. I feel—I know, that this is the only retreat befitting my condition; elsewhere, I should again find myself in that cruelly false position from which I have so much suffered, not only for myself, but for you; for I have my pride also. Your daughter shall be what she ought to be; will act as your daughter should act; will suffer as she ought to suffer. To-morrow, all the world might know the filth from which you extricated me, and they would perhaps pardon me the past by virtue of my present humility. And it would not be so, my father, were they to see me as I was only a few months back, shining amid the splendour of your court. Moreover, in satisfying the severe and just requirements of society, I satisfy my own conscience; therefore, I thank God with all the fervour of which my soul is capable, when I reflect that it is He alone who can offer an asylum to your daughter, worthy of her and you—a position which will not form an afflicting contrast with my former degradation, and from which I may derive the only respect which is due to me—that respect which is granted to sincere repentance and humility."

Alas! Clémence, how could I answer this? Fatality! fatality! for this unhappy child is gifted, if one may so express it, with an inflexible logic in all that regards delicacy of feeling, and of honour. With such an understanding, and such a soul, all attempts at palliation, or to turn a false position, would be vain. We can only submit to her implacable resolution.

I left her, as I always do, heart-broken, without having founded the slightest hope upon this interview, which will be our last before her *profession*. I had said to myself: "She may still renounce the cloister;" but, my friend, her determination is irrevocable, and I cannot, alas! do otherwise than agree with her in thinking, *that it is God alone who can offer her an asylum, and a position worthy of her and me.*"

Her resolution is admirably suitable and logical, as regards the state of society in which we live. With the exquisite susceptibility of Fleur-de-Marie, no other position could be compatible. But I have often told you, my dear friend, that, were it not for the sacred duties of my station, more sacred still than those of family affection, which retain me amid a people by whom I am

* On some occasions, nuns have been elevated to the dignity of abbess on the very day of their profession. See *The Life of the very high and very holy Princess Charlotte Flandrina de Nassau, very worthy abbess of the royal monastery of Sainte-Croix, who was elected abbess at the age of nineteen years.*

beloved, and to whom I am in some wise a Providence, I should have fled with you, my daughter, Henry, and Murphy, to some undiscoverable retreat, and there have lived obscure and happy. There, far from the dominion of those imperious laws of a society, incapable of remedying the evils it has inflicted, we might have forced this unhappy child to enjoy happiness and forgetfulness. Whereas here, in the midst of this display, these courtly ceremonies, curtailed even as they might be, it would be impossible. Again, I repeat, fatality! fatality! I cannot abdicate my power, without compromising the welfare of a people who depend upon me. Brave and worthy people—may they be ever ignorant of the sacrifices I am making for their happiness!

Adieu! tenderly adieu! my best beloved Clémence. It is almost a consolation to me to see you as much afflicted as myself by the fate of our poor child; for thus I can say *our* affliction, and there is no egotism in my sufferings.

Sometimes, I ask myself with terror: What would have been my fate, deprived of you, in the midst of these appalling circumstances? and this reflection makes me feel more keenly the fate of our child, for you will still be near me. What remains to her? Henceforward she will be alone.

Once more, and sorrowfully, I say adieu! adieu! noble and tender friend; my good angel in the hour of affliction. Return soon to me; this absence must be as painful to you as it is to me.

To you, I dedicate my life and love, heart and soul. Yours,

R.

I forward this letter by a courier; and to-morrow, unless some unforeseen change should happen, I will expedite another, immediately after the sorrowful ceremony. A thousand wishes and hopes to your father for his speedy convalescence. I had forgotten to speak to you of poor Henry; his health is improving, and the fears entertained for him are much quieted. His excellent father, although suffering himself from illness, summoned sufficient strength to watch over and sit up with him—a miracle of paternal love, but which does not surprise either you or me.

Farewell then, till to-morrow—to-morrow—to me a fatal and inauspicious day.

Again yours, for ever yours,

R.

ABBEY OF SAINTE-HERMANGILDE,
4 o'clock in the morning.

Do not be alarmed, Clémence, do not be alarmed; although the hour and place in which this letter is written, must necessarily awaken your fears.

Thanks to God! the danger is now over; but the crisis has been terrible.

After having written to you yesterday, being agitated by I know not what fatal presentiment, recalling to mind the paleness, the too evident suffering of my child, the state of weakness under which she has languished for some time past, reflecting finally that she was about to pass the night preceding her profession, in prayer, in an immense and ice-cold church, I sent Murphy and David to the abbey, to request the Princess Julianne would permit them to remain in the house without the abbey-walls, in which Henry used to reside. By this arrangement, my daughter could obtain immediate medical assistance, and I could hear from her, if, as I feared, her strength should fail her before accomplishing this rigorous, I will not say cruel obligation, of remaining during a long and inclement January night, praying before the altar. I had also written to Fleur-de-Marie, that although respecting the exercise of her religious duties, I entreated her to be careful of her health, and to perform her vigils in her cell, and not within the church. This is the answer I received from her:

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for this new and tender proof of your affection; do not feel any apprehension on my account—I think I have strength sufficient to perform this duty. Your daughter's salvation, my dear father cannot be attained by either fear or weakness—such are the regulations of the church, and to them I will conform. Should any physical sufferings ensue, it is with joy that I shall offer them to God. You will, I trust, approve my resolution, you, who have always practised self-denial as a duty, with so much fortitude and courage. Farewell, my dear father—I will not say that I shall pray for you—in praying to God I always pray to you, for it is impossible not to confound you with the divinity I implore; you have been to me on earth, what God will, should I merit it, be to me in heaven.

"Deign this night to bless your daughter with your thoughts, my dear father; to-morrow she will have become the bride of the Lord.

"She kisses your hand with pious respect.

"SISTER AMELIA."

This letter, which I could not read without bursting into tears, quieted me in some degree; I also was about to perform an inauspicious vigil.

When the night set in, I shut myself up in the pavilion, which I have had built, not far from the monument erected to the memory of my father, in expiation of that fatal night.

At about one o'clock, I heard the voice of Murphy. I shuddered with alarm; he had come from the convent in great haste.

As I had anticipated, the unhappy child, notwithstanding her great courage and her decided will, had not the strength to accomplish fully this barbarous custom, and from which the Princess Julianne could not absolve her, the regulation being imperative in this particular.

At eight o'clock, Fleur-de-Marie knelt down on the cold stones, and continued praying until midnight; but at that hour, overcome by weakness, by the intense cold, by her emotions, for she had wept long and silently, she fell into a swoon. Two of the sisters, who, by order of the Princess Julianne, had assisted at her vigils, raised her from the pavement, and carried her into her cell.

David was instantly summoned: Murphy took a carriage, and hastened to me: I flew to the convent, where I was received by the Princess Julianne. She told me that David feared my presence might affect my daughter too strongly; that her fainting fit, from which she had recovered, did not give grounds for much alarm, having been caused by her great weakness.

At first, a dreadful idea took full possession of me. I thought they wished to conceal a more frightful misfortune, or at least to prepare my mind to hear it; but the abbess said: "I affirm to you, my lord, the Princess Amelia is out of danger; a cordial which Doctor David has given her, has restored her strength."

I could not doubt the assurance of the abbess;

I believed her, and waited with painful anxiety to hear further of my daughter. In about a quarter of an hour, of anguish on my part, David returned. Thanks to God! she was much better, and had insisted on continuing her vigils in the church, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion; and as I was indignant and disgusted that the abbess and David should have yielded to her wish, I formally opposed it. David replied, that it would have been dangerous to have opposed my daughter's wish, at a moment when she was under the influence of great nervous excitement; and it was, moreover, agreed that the poor child should leave the church at the hour of matins, to take some rest, and prepare herself for the ceremony.

"She is now in the church, then?" said I to David.

"Yes, my lord; but she will leave it in less than half an hour."

I made him conduct me to our closet, in the north tribune, from which I could view all the choir. There, amid the gloom that pervaded this vast church, illuminated only by the pale glimmering of the lamp, in the sanctuary, I saw her praying fervently. I also threw myself upon my knees, and thought upon my child. It struck three o'clock; two sisters who were sitting in the stalls, and had attentively been watching her, went to her and whispered to her; a few moments afterwards, she crossed herself, rose up and traversed the choir, with a tolerably firm step. And, oh! my beloved, when she passed under the lamp, her face appeared to me as white as the long veil which flowed around her.

I immediately quitted the tribune, thinking at first to hasten to her, but that I feared a new emotion might prevent her taking a few minutes' rest. I sent David to inquire if she was less indisposed. He returned and told me she felt better, and she would endeavour to sleep a little.

I remain at the abbey, to attend the ceremony which takes place this morning. I think it will be useless, my dear wife, to send this letter to you thus unfinished. I will conclude it to-morrow, by relating to you the events of this sad day. Till then, farewell, my beloved. I am broken down with grief. Pity me.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

RODOLPH TO CLEMENCE.

The 13th of January—an anniversary now doubly inauspicious!

My friend, we have lost her for ever.

All is over—all!

Listen to this recital.

It is indeed true. It is a fearful luxury to relate a horrible calamity. Yesterday, I was annoyed by the accident that kept you away from me. To-day, Clémence, I congratulate myself that you are not here; you would suffer too deeply.

This morning, when dosing, I was awakened by the sound of the bells: I started with affright: it seemed to me funereal—it was like a melancholy knell.

In fact, my daughter is dead to us, dead! From this day, Clémence, you must begin to carry mourning in your heart—a heart wont to beat maternally for her.

Let our child be buried under the marble of a tomb, or under the arches of a cloister—to us, what is the difference?

From this day, Clémence, we must regard her as dead. Besides, she is so very weak a creature; her health, altered by so many mortifications, and so many shocks, is so unsteady. Why should there be any death more complete? Adverse fate never becomes weary.

And, moreover, after my letter of yesterday, you must see that it would be happier for her to be really dead.

Death! these five letters have a strange appearance—do you not find it so? written concerning an idolised daughter—a daughter so beautiful—so charming—so angelic—only eighteen—and dead to the world?

Of what advantage can it be either to us or to her, that she should vegetate, a poor sufferer, in the sullen silence of the cloister? Why should she live, if she be lost to us? She must love her life dearly. What a terrible fate has hers been!

What I say is frightful: I know it; it is a barbarous egotism growing out of paternal love!

At noon, she made her profession amid the most solemn pomp. Concealed behind the curtains of our tribune, I assisted at the ceremony. I have felt, but with stronger intensity than ever, all the poignant emotions which have stirred our hearts since her noviciate.

She is a fanciful creature, and they adore her; they generally believe that she is drawn towards a religious life by an irresistible inward calling; she is determined to see in her profession a world of happiness, and to regard the existence of all others, who do not embrace her opinions, as comparatively miserable.

At the lower end of the church, among the people, I saw two inferior officers of my guards—two aged and rough soldiers—bow their heads and weep.

There seemed to be in the very atmosphere a sad foreboding: a strange idea it may be; but we, in a manner, inhaled melancholy with our breath. Do you comprehend my thought? I almost realised it.

When the procession was over, our child was led into a hall belonging to the chapel, where it was necessary that the nomination of the new abbess should take place.

Thanks to my privilege as a sovereign, I went into the hall to attend Fleur-de-Marie on the return of the choir.

She soon entered.

Her emotion and feebleness were such, that two sisters supported her.

I was terrified, yet less at the paleness of her features than at the expression of her smile. It seemed to me marked by a satisfaction truly ominous.

Clémence—I tell you, my dear, because soon, perhaps, we shall require courage—I am inclined to believe that our child is struck with a mortal madness ——

——After all, her life will be *so* wretched ——

Twice have I said to myself, when contemplating the probability of our child's early death—that this death would at least put an end to her cruel existence.——This thought is horribly foreboding. But if this calamity *is* to smite us, it is best to be prepared; is it not, Clémence?

To prepare ourselves by reflection for the misfortune which we anticipate, is to taste that misfortune gradually, while slow anguish eats into the heart. It is a refinement of misery, self-inflicted. It is a thousand times more terrible than the blow that strikes us unforeseen. At least stupor,

virtual annihilation, spares us a part of this awful agony.

But the habitual feeling of compassion compels you to anticipate and prepare yourself. I probably should not suffer so much, my poor wife, if I had to apprise you of the fatal event to which I have been referring. You are alarmed—you observe that I caution you against the return of despairing sadness—I have told you the state of her heart; but, remember, I have added, that it by no means occasions me much anxiety.

Yes, you are alarmed, if I speak as I do now—for although I left her so calm, the time is coming which shall close the subject of this letter; I repeat it to you, Clémence, it appears to me, that she suffers more than can be known from her outward manner and habitual aspect.

Heaven grant that I may be deceiving myself, and that I may be mistaking for presentiments the hopeless sadness with which this mournful ceremony has inspired me.

Fleur-de-Marie then entered into the grand hall of the chapter.

All the stalls were successively filled by the nuns. She modestly seated herself last of the row on the left. She leaned upon the arm of one of the sisters, for she seemed still too weak to walk alone.

At the upper end of the hall sat the Princess Julianne, having on one side the grand-prioress, and on the other a second dignitary holding in her hand the cross of gold—the symbol of abbatial authority.

There was a profound silence; the princess rose, taking her cross in her hand, and said in a voice grave and distinct: "My dear daughters, my great age obliges me to entrust to one younger than myself, this emblem of my spiritual power. (She exhibited her cross). I am here authorised, by a bull of our Holy Peter. I shall, therefore, present to the blessing of my lord the Archbishop of Oppenheim, and for the approval of his royal Highness, the Grand Duke, our sovereign, that one of your number, my dear daughters, whom you shall choose to be my successor. Our grand prioress wishes you to state the result of the election; and to her whom you point out, I shall transmit my cross and ring.

I did not cease for a moment to gaze upon my child.

There, in her stall, her two hands joined upon her bosom, her eyes downcast, half concealed by her white veil and the long, flowing folds of her black robe, she remained motionless and pensive. She by no means anticipated her elevation: the abbess had confided the secret only to me.

The grand prioress took a register, and read: "Each of our dear sisters having been, according to rule, invited, eight days were given them for depositing their votes in the hands of our Holy Mother. And they were enjoined mutually to conceal their secret choice up to this moment, in the name of our Holy Mother. I declare that one of you, my sisters, has, by her exemplary piety, and by her evangelical virtues, deserved the unanimous vote of the society; and that the election is in favour of our sister Amelia, who, in the world, was known as the lofty and powerful Princess of Gerolstein."

At these words, a sort of murmur of sweet surprise and happy satisfaction circulated in the hall. All the nuns fixed their eyes on my child with an expression of tender sympathy, spite of my strong prejudices. I was moved by this nomination, which, having made at first secretly and individually, and unanimity really touching.

Fleur-de-Marie, stupefied, became so pale. Her knees trembled so much, that obliged to lean with one hand on the stall.

The abbess replied, in a distinct voice: "My dear daughters, you have in deciding that sister Amelia is the and deserving of you all. You have in recognising her as your spiritual Let each of you reply in her turn daughters"

And every sister responded with "Freely and voluntarily have I choose sister Amelia for my holy superior." Overcome with a tumultuous my poor child fell upon her knees, hands, and remained in this posture vote had been rendered. Then the abbess the cross and ring in the hands of prioress, advanced towards my daughter, her by the hand and lead her to the chair.

My love, my gentle love, I must pause moment; I must take courage before late to you the heart-rending scene.

"Arise, my dear daughter," said the "come and occupy the seat which you; it has been won, not by your rank your evangelical virtues."

As she said these words, the venerable cess drew near my daughter to assist her.

Fleur-de-Marie tremblingly advanced steps till she reached the middle of the hall, when she stopped and said, in a calmness and strength of which astonished "Pardon me, holy mother; I wish to my sisters."

"Ascend first, my daughter, your chair; from thence your voice should be

"That place, holy mother, is, perhaps mine," answered Fleur-de-Marie, in a tremulous voice.

"What say you, my dear daughter

"So high a dignity is not made for mother."

"But the voice of all your sisters has you to it."

"Suffer me, holy mother, here upon to make a solemn confession; and my and yourself also, holy mother, will ceive that the humblest condition is not enough for me."

"Your modesty misleads you, my dear ter," kindly said the abbess, believing that the unhappy child succumbed to a of exaggerated modesty; but I easily the avowals which Fleur-de-Marie was make.

Seized with affright, I cried out in a ting voice: "My child, I conjure you—

It would be indeed impossible to tell that I read in the glance which Fleur-de cast upon me at these words. Then you understand that in a moment she understood Yes! she understood that I was to share shame of this horrible revelation. She ceived, that after such a confession, I might accused—yes, *I*—of falsehood. For, from first, I had suffered it to be believed that de-Marie had never left her mother.

At this idea, the poor child imagined that she had been guilty of some black ingratitude towards me. She had not strength to continue speaking, but was silent, and drooped her head as if completely overcome.

"Yet once more, my dear girl," replied the abbess, "your modesty deceives you; the unanimity of the choice of your sisters proves to you how worthy you are to fill my place. From the very fact that you have taken part in the joys of the world, there is the more merit in your renunciation of those joys. It is not her Highness the Princess Amelia that is chosen—it is sister Amelia. As regards us, your life began only upon the day when you first set foot in the house of the Lord; and it is that holy and exemplary life which we now recompense. I will tell you more, my dear child: had your life before entering the pale of the church, been as guilty as it has on the contrary been pure and praiseworthy, the evangelical virtues of which you have given us an example during your residence here, would have expiated and redeemed, in the eyes of the Lord, all that had passed, however guilty it might have been. After this, my dear daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be reassured."

This speech of the abbess, as you will readily believe, my beloved, was so much more precious to Fleur-de-Marie, as she believed the past to be indelible. Unfortunately, this scene had moved her very deeply, and although she affected to be perfectly composed and firm, it seemed to me that the expression of her features was changed in a very alarming manner. And several times she shuddered, passing her poor emaciated hand across her face.

"I think that I have convinced you, my dear daughter," replied the Princess Julianne; "and that you will not choose to give your sisters so lively a cause for sorrow, as to refuse this token of their confidence and kind affection.

"Yes! holy mother," she replied, with an expression which struck me with alarm, and with a voice which grew fuller every moment; "I think *now* that I can accept it; but as I feel myself very much fatigued, and by no means free from pain, if you will permit it, my dear mother, the ceremony of my consecration shall not take place for some days."

"It shall be done as you desire, my dear daughter; but until your dignity shall have been duly blessed and consecrated, take this ring, come into your place, our beloved sisters will pay you homage according to the rule."

And the superior, slipping the pastoral ring upon the finger of Fleur-de-Marie, conducted her to the abbatial chair. It was a simple but touching sight. Close to the chair on which she took her seat, stood on one side the grand prioress, holding the golden crucifix, and on the other the Princess Julianne. Each of the sisters advanced and bowed before our child, and kissed her hand respectfully.

I saw that her agitation was increasing every moment, that her features were becoming more and more altered; in a word, the whole scene was undoubtedly too much for her strength, for she fainted away before the procession of the nuns was at an end.

Judge of my terror; we bore her away into the apartment of the abbess.

David had not yet left the convent; he hurried in, and gave her instant assistance. Oh! may he not have deceived me! but he assured me that this new accident had no other source than the extreme weakness caused by the severe fasting, by the fatigues, and loss of sleep which my daughter had imposed upon herself during her long and hard noviciate.

I believed him, because, in point of fact, her angelic features, although alarmingly pale, discovered no signs of any suffering, when she recovered her consciousness; on the contrary, I was struck by the radiant serenity of her fair brow. But again this very quietude alarmed me. It appeared to me that she entertained some secret hope of a speedy deliverance.

The superior having returned to the chapter to close the sitting, I remained alone with my daughter.

"My good, kind father—can you forget my ingratitude? can you forget, that, at the very moment in which I was about to make that painful confession, you asked my pardon?"

"Be silent—I implore you."

"And I never once reflected," she replied bitterly, "that, while I was telling the whole world from what an abyss of degradation you had rescued me, I was in fact revealing the secret which you had kept for me so tenderly. I was publicly accusing you, my father, of an act of dissimulation, to which you had yielded only in order to insure to me an honourable and exalted life—oh, my father can you pardon me?"

I glued my lips to her forehead. She felt my tears drop upon her face. After she had kissed my hands repeatedly, she said: "Now I feel better, my kind father. Now that I am here, dead, as our rule has it, to all the world, I would wish to make some legacies in favour of several persons; but, as everything that I possess belongs to you, will you give me your authority, my father, to do so?"

"Can you doubt it? Oh! I entreat you," I said to her, "retain no longer these sad thoughts. You shall soon be engaged in this duty. There is sufficient time."

"Doubtless, my kind father, I have yet long to live," she added, with an accent which I know not wherefore, again made me shudder. I watched her more attentively, but no change in her features justified my uneasiness. Yes; I have still long to live!" she continued; "but I must no longer occupy myself with worldly business; for, henceforth, to-day, I renounce everything that links me to the world. I entreat you, refuse me not."

"Command me. I will do whatever you desire."

"I wish that my tender mother should always keep in the little drawing-room, where she is wont to sit, my little embroidering-frame, with the piece of tapestry which I have begun."

"Your desires, my child, shall be gratified. Your apartment has been kept exactly in the same state as on the day when you left the palace; for everything which belonged to you has become unto us an object of almost religious veneration. Clémence will be touched deeply by this thought of yours."

"As for you, my dear father, take, I entreat you, my great ebony arm-chair, in which I have so often sat, in which I have so deeply pondered."

"It shall be placed beside my own, in my study; and I shall fancy daily, that I shall see you sitting there, as you were wont to sit," I answered, unable any longer to conceal my tears.

"Now, I would fain leave some memorials of affection to those who showed so much interest

in me, in the hours of affliction. To Madame Georges, I would wish to give my writing-desk which I last used; there will be a certain fitness in the present," she added, with her own sweet smile, "for it was she who began to teach me how to write, when I was at the farm. As to the venerable curate of Bouqueval, who was my first instructor in religion, I propose to give the beautiful crucifix from my oratory."

"Yes, my child."

"I wish to send my bandeau of pearls to my excellent little Rigolette; it is a simple ornament, which she may well wear in her beautiful black hair. If it be possible, since you know where Martial and Louve are to be found in Algeria, I could wish that courageous woman, who preserved my life, to have my cross of enamelled gold. These different memorials you will be so kind as to send as *gifts from Fleur-de-Marie.*"

"I will execute the slightest of your wishes: you forget no one?"

"I think not, dearest father."

"Consider well; among those who love you, is there no one very unhappy? as unhappy as your mother and I? any one who regrets bitterly that you have entered this convent?"

The poor child understood me, and pressed my hand, while a slight flush crossed her pale face.

Anticipating the question which I perceived she was afraid to put to me, I added: "He is better—he is no longer in any danger."

"And his father?"

"He is benefited by the improvement of his son's health—he too is better. And to Henry! what will you give to Henry? A keepsake from you will be to him a dear and precious consolation."

"My father—offer him my *pris-dieu.* Alas! I have very often watered it with my tears; beseeching heaven to give me strength to forget Henry, since I was unworthy of his love."

"How happy will he be, to see that you have retained a thought for him. As for the asylum for orphans, and young girls forsaken by their parents, I should desire, my father, that ——"

Here Rodolph's letter was brought to a rapid conclusion, by these words, written almost illegibly: "Clémence—Murphy will finish this letter —I have no more mind left—I am mad. Alas! the THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY."

The end of this letter, in the handwriting of Sir Walter Murphy, ran thus:—

By the orders of his royal highness, I finish this sad recital. My lord's two letters will have prepared your royal highness for the distressing intelligence which it becomes my duty to communicate.

Three hours have elapsed since my lord was writing to your royal highness: I waited in a neighbouring room for the letter, to forward it by a courier. Suddenly, I saw the Princess Julianne enter with a terrified aspect. "Where is his royal highness?" said she, with an agitated voice. "Princess, my lord is writing to the grand duchess the intelligence of this day." "Sir Walter, you must apprise my lord of a terrible event. You are his friend—go and tell him—from you, this blow will be less terrible."

I understood everything; I believed it best that I should communicate the dreadful news. The abbess added, that the princess Amelia was sinking slowly, and that my lord should hasten to receive the last sighs of his daughter. Unhappily, I had not time enough gently to break the news. I entered the room; his royal highness saw my emotion: "You come to impart to me some new misfortune." "An irreparable misfortune, my lord. But take courage!" "Ah! my presentiments!" cried he—and without adding another word, he rushed to the cloister. I followed him.

The Princess Amelia had been borne from the room of the abbess, after her last interview with her father, to her own cell. One of the sisters watched over her: at the expiration of an hour, she perceived that the Princess Amelia, who spoke at intervals, grew feeble, and became more and more oppressed. The sister requested her to inform the abbess. Doctor David was called: he attempted to remedy this new loss of strength by a cordial, but in vain; the beating of her pulse was scarcely sensible. He saw with despair, that her continued emotions had probably exhausted the little remaining strength of the Princess Amelia. There was no hope of saving her.

It was at that moment my lord arrived. The Princess Amelia had just received the sacrament. A faint ray of consciousness still remained. Her hands were crossed upon her bosom: in one of them she held *the remains of her little rose-tree.*

My lord fell upon his knees beside her bed, and sobbed aloud.

"Pardon! my dear father—also of Henry—of my good mother—pardon!"

These were her last words.

In about an hour, she gave up her soul to God.

When his daughter had breathed her last sigh, my lord uttered not a word. His silence and his calmness were terrifying. He closed the eyelids of the princess, kissed her forehead several times, with pious feeling, took the remains of the little rose-tree from her hand, and left the cell.

I followed him; he returned to the house without the abbey walls, and showing me the letter he had begun to your royal highness, and to which he in vain attempted to add a few words, for his hand trembled convulsively, he said: "It is impossible for me to write—I am utterly annihilated—my brain turns—write to the grand duchess, that I no longer have a daughter!"

I have now fulfilled the orders of my lord.

May it be permitted to me, as his oldest servant, to entreat your royal highness to hasten your return, as much as the health of the Count d'Orbigny will permit. Your presence alone can calm the despair of my lord. He insists upon watching every night the body of his daughter, until the day when it shall be entombed in the Grand Ducal Chapel.

My sorrowful task is now accomplished, madame; deign to excuse the incoherency of this letter, and to receive the assurance of respectful devotion, while I have the honour to be,

Your highness's
Very obedient servant,
WALTER MURPHY.

* * *

On the evening previous to the funeral ceremony of the Princess Amelia, Clémence and her father arrived at Gerolstein.

Rodolph was not left alone on the day of the obsequies of Fleur-de-Maria.

THE END.

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